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Bunye on Jay Leno's wisecrack: It ain't funny

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Cash-starved Pinoy is New York's most honest cabbie

Sunday, July 18, 2004 • 38 pages / vol. 19 / no. 221 • www.inq7.net

Full pullout before Sona

GMA urged to withdraw last RP soldier from Iraq by July 26

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Jules Javellana and Marvin Marfil

GREEN pastures do not exactly present the true picture of Buenavista, Pampanga, the impoverished farming hometown of Angelo de la Cruz. Which is why he and many of his townmates had sought greener pastures overseas. It has a "good view" of hectares of farmlands that visitors do not own. Now, thanks to De la Cruz, the village has grabbed government attention, and soon Buenavista will be included in the sovereign of agrarian reform communities with foreign funding.

Living isn't good in village with a 'good view'

By Tonette Orejas
PIA Central Luzon Desk

THE AIDS ALARM

Drive for public awareness an uphill battle for advocates

By Jerry E. Esplanada
(Last of two parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

A JEWEL IN QC: The 23-hectare La Mesa Watershed Nature and Ecological Park in East Fairview, open every day to the public, is a project of the QC government, the MWSS and ABS-CBN's Bantay Kalikasan Foundation with inputs from Sen. Francis Pangilinan and former Sen. Loren Legarda. (Story on Page 06.)

Palace in South: 'I'll live here'

Old furniture, fresh paint for GMA's Cebu office

By John Ludwig Javellana

CEBU CITY—It will be old furniture and fresh paint for the "Malacañang in the South."

All she had on Friday was a room with a table and chairs, but President Macapagal-Arroyo said it was effectively her first day in the sun. Malacañang has also put up at the 84-year-old building used by the Bureau of Customs in the Port area here.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2004

WEATHER FORECAST

Higher tariffs on steel imports to hike prices all around, say traders

By GIC Cabacungan Jr.

THE GOVERNMENT is poised to raise duties on steel imports this week to ensure the profitability of National Steel Corp., but businessmen warned that higher tariffs on steel could lead to more costly tin cans, steel pipes and G.I. sheets and, subsequently, higher prices of canned food products and construction materials.

Trade Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal Jr. said the business that if any adjustment in import duty on steel products were to be implemented, the executive order should be issued this week or before Congress opens on July 26.

From 0 to 7 percent

A Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry official, who requested anonymity, said President Macapagal-Arroyo was planning to raise duties on tinplate from new percent to seven percent, cold-rolled coils (used to make G.I. sheets for roofs) and body plates for appliances and from three percent to seven percent, and hot-rolled coils (used for steel pipes and scaffoldings) from three percent to five percent.

NSC is now being operated by Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. (GIHL), a subsidiary of Indian steel giant Ispat, which was handpicked by the government to rehabilitate the country's steel giant which shut down in September 2000 due to mounting debts and huge losses.

Ma Arroyo herself graced the inauguration of NSC in February.

Undue haste

Fears that a tariff hike on steel products was being unfounded had been bolstered by the undue haste in holding a public hearing on the increase at the Tariff Commission on Monday or just two days after the announcement was made. Normally a hearing is held at least after one week following the announcement.

NSC, whose products encompass all three categories but not all of the variants required by local steel producers, has been lobbying for a tariff hike of 15 percent and 30 percent.

Higher tariffs would make competing steel products from abroad more expensive and allow NSC to corner a bigger chunk of the domestic market.

Recap investment factor

While the President intended to use the high steel tariffs to help a foreign investor recoup its investment factor, businessmen warned that this circumvents established rules at the expense of local industries that use steel as their basic raw material and consumers who would have to pay for the higher cost of steel products.

Antonio R. Tanedo, president of the Tri-City Galvanizers Association of the Philippines, warned that in view of the surge in global prices of tinplates (up 67 percent to $900 per metric ton from last year), local tin can makers might be forced to close shop due to eroding margins.

Pia choice

Tanedo said manufacturers, from food products to cooking oil to paint, would have no choice but to increase the prices of their products to offset the higher costs of the tin cans.

Julito D. Vena, president of the Filipino Consumers Institute, said higher duties on cold-rolled coils and hot-rolled coils would only add more pressure to the industry already suffering from rising steel prices worldwide.

Domino effect

Vena added that this could have a domino effect on the prices of appliances, air conditioners and water bottles as well, as consumer materials.

He said NSC does not deserve a tariff hike because it does not produce the cold-rolled coils that local G.I. sheet makers need.

$90 million commitment

GIHL has committed to invest $90 million in NSC, covering up its production to two million tons by next year.

But both Tanedo and Vena have expressed serious doubts on Ispat's ability to meet its commitments as they argued that government is rarely here and GIHL has spent no time to study it took over the plant and machineries.

HANDS ON
President Macapagal-Arroyo takes part in a demonstration in Dumaguete City showing how fish can be put to cheap and creative use some hours without water. The demonstration, conducted by technicians of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, makes use of Bonifacio Commodore's "instant no-salt solution," for which he won an inventors' award.

GMA: SONA bills package won't include Cha-cha

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

CEBU CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo said she would ask Congress to approve a package of five legislative initiatives during her State of the Nation Address on July 26.

Ms. Arroyo told reporters a bill seeking an amendment to the Constitution to effect the shift to a parliamentary federal system would not be included in the legislative package that she will present for passage during the Sona. But she will address it at the joint session of the 12th Congress.

She said she would observe the one-year moratorium on Charter change (Cha-cha) discussions that congressional leaders had proposed to give legislators time to tackle the country's fiscal problems.

"I may mention it in the Sona but the introduction of the measure for discussion will be after the one-year moratorium," she told reporters during her visit to the Mahaseluna in the South Seas.

House Speaker Jose de Venecia had proposed a 100-day moratorium on Charter change.

The President's statement yesterday was the latest modification on her position on the issue.

She said during the recent election campaign that she was willing to step down in 2007 to pave the way for a shift to a parliamentary system. After her inaugural, however, she said she was for having the shift made after her six-year term ended in 2010.

Ms Arroyo said the five components of the legislative package include economic growth and jobs creation, anti-corruption and good governance, education and youth development, energy and a pro-poor initiatives.

She said that the day after the Sona she would convene a series of meetings of the Cabinet Development Management Advisory Council to discuss specific measures.

She said she would also continue to hold townhall meetings, a practice that she started during the election campaign, to discuss legislative initiatives with the people in the provinces.

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Uncertain welcome awaits Pinoy leader of Iraq force

By Alcuin Papa

WHILE truck driver Angelo de la Cruz, who is still being held captive by Iraqi militants, is waiting home to a certain festive welcome, Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan, head of the Philippine humanitarian contingent in Iraq, faces an uncertain fate when he returns.

Back home, the controversial Palparan will have to face several cases filed against him by militant groups for alleged human rights violations while he was head of a military detachment in Mindoro.

Militant groups said they had documented more than 300 human rights cases involving more than 1,000 individuals and more than 500 families in the province in the span of just two years under Palparan's watch.

"We have no plans to welcome him home," Bayan secretary general and Bayan Muna activist Rep. Teddy Casiño told the Inquirer.

Casiño said that Palparan will "have to answer alleged human rights crimes on Mindoro island once he arrives."

He pointed out that he is not happy that Palparan managed to get off scot-free from the mess for a while when he was assigned to Iraq. The least was off him. But now the hour is going to be hard."

Palparan has two pending administrative and criminal cases filed against him before the Department of Justice.

These cases involve the killing of Chai Raperes, a Bayan coordinator in Mindoro, and the twin deaths of Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy, Karapatan secretary general for Southern Tagalog and tribunado peasant leader, respectively.

"We are asking the DOJ to hasten the prosecution of these cases and are still the outstanding for [Palparan] never shows," Casiño said.

Palparan, former commander of the 204th Infantry Battalion based in Mindoro, was relieved of his command when various cause-oriented groups protested the visiting team of human rights violations in the island.

He was sent to Jolo, a province in the south, again put in the limelight after he resurfaced as chief of the Philippine contingent to Iraq.

Casiño said Palparan was even promoted to general in this time despite the objections of cause-oriented groups.

He said Mindoro became a "pilot area" for new counter-insurgency strategies adopted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. "But what happened here is that it was the civilians who were severely affected."

Palparan and 53 members of the Philippine humanitarian contingent were pulled out of Iraq Friday and are due to arrive in Manila on Monday. Early Saturday, they are held at Camp Doha in Kuwait.

However, there were reports that Palparan would remain in Jordan for unspecified reasons. The 14 soldiers will fly back to the Philippines on a Kuwait Airlines flight.

Graft raps filed vs 7 PNR execs

EMPLOYEES of the Philippine National Railways (PNR) filed graft charges yesterday before the Office of the Ombudsman against seven top PNR officials for alleged misdevotion of billions of pesos in funds and property of the agency.

Charged with graft were PNR general manager Jose Mo. L. Sarmiento II and executives Rafael Manera, Josefina Santos, Cirilito Corpuz, Constantino B. Buenaagua, Estelita Reyes and Roderick Medrano.

"There is more happening at the PNR than odd-shaped roads or accidental deaths of people (referring to the railway's tracks, Graft is the biggest issue there," Emilio Abella, general vice president of the Bagong Kapisanan ng Mga Manggagawa sa PNR (BKMPNR) told the Inquirer after the filing of it's case.

In a 12-page complaint, the PNR employees accused the management of:

- Allegedly failing to conduct an inventory of the P12.43 billion "fixed assets" of the PNR.
- Reported failure to conduct inventory and account for P97.37 million of PNR's "materials, supplies and spare parts."
- Failing to produce documents relative to a PNR 1994 income project.
- "Irregularities" in the reconciliation of long-term loan balances between the books of the agency and the Bureau of Treasury in the amount of P1.36 billion."

The PNR employees also furnished the anti-graft agency a January 19 report from the Commission on Audit showing alleged "major deficiencies" in the inventory and accounting of P561.3 billion worth of medicines purchased by the agency last year.

Armando M. Nocum

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Melendrez

WORLD POOL

Last RP bet crashes out

MANALO: Giant slayer

THE SLAYER of giant Jose Ballon.

Marlon Manalo, who brought down several cue icons on his way to the quarterfinals, marched his run end their yesterday at the hands of Taiwanese Wang Chuchen, 11-6, and left the 2004 World Pool Championship at the World Trade Center in Chinese Taipei without a Filipino contender.

Chuchen racked up four straight wins, stared down a rally by Manalo and then pocketed four of the last five games to enter the semifinals, where he faces the winner of the match between two-time world champ Johnny Archer of the United States and blood bet Chang Jih-wei.

It was a sorry defeat for Manalo, who teamed as one of the favorites for the top $15,000 (P82,125,000) prize after downing down some of the tourney meet's biggest names.

The 28-year-old member specialist first made people notice when he dropped Asian fanfave and crowd favorite Ping Ching-chun and then consumed his scalp as a contender with spanking victories over Filipino icons Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Efren "Bata" Reyes.

But Manalo got little going against Chuchen, who eyed his 4-0 start to private a path to the final four.

Manalo pushed up a little midway, closing the gap to 7-5, but the Sawale countered with a strong finish, taking four of the next five games to ice the victory.

Manalo, the only one among 12 Filipinos to reach the quarterfinals, was assured of $10,000 (P550,000) for his feat.

AGOJO: Invitation from Purdue, Pepperdine

Agojo gets 2 scholastic offers in US

By Joey Arcaro

SAN DIEGO—Jaycee Agojo played out her final Callaway Junior World stint without expectations. All she wanted was to make her father, Jun, happy.

She did that and more, earning two scholastic offers from big US schools after a second straight 2-under par 71 on Friday (Saturday in Manila) to cap her campaign in the girls' 15-17-years division.

Agojo's 13th place showing, which capped the most fruitful Philippine campaign here since 1985, drew invitations from Purdue in Indiana and Pepperdine in Malibu, California, both National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I schools.

Agojo was approached by scouts from both schools after her fighting finish against the rising names in the women's amateur ranks including current US Public Links champion Song Ye Bi.

The ladies' field had 120 entries from all over the world.

Song's five birdies in the back nine were not enough to win her another crown, losing by one to Mari Chun of Hawaii. Chun shot 76-207 with Song (70) ending up tied with Jessica Hurtado of Colombia (75) at 208.

The 17-year-old Agojo was chasing a big 10 finish until she bogeyed the 17th and dubbed a makeable birdie putt on the 18th. Agojo's 294 aggregate for 72 holes fell just a stroke short of the 20th submitted by Thai Sawit's Montaya Siwawong and Gloria Song of California who shared ninth.

"This is really for my dad. We've been through a lot and I'm just glad to have given him a performance worthy of his happiness," said Agojo.

For his part, Jun Agojo acknowledged the hard work exacted by Jaycee to get to the next level. "I never saw her work so hard and I think the reward something not just to me but to herself this week."

Agojo wrapped up the RP campaign a day after Jil Gonzalez scintillating encore to the boys' 9-10 division on Thursday (Friday in Manila) that broke the country's 14-year losing spell in the boys division.

Second place finishes by Dottie Ardina (girls' 6-10 years) and Janella Sagucio (girls' 6 years and under) plus a third place effort by Jordan Francisco Dy Buyco (6 years and under) added to Gonzalez' win.

Emilio Aquino Monster made a good account of himself in the boys' 15-17, sharing 22nd place among 100 entries.

A sit-tapping Super-Double Bogey winding marred Aquino's final day effort of 4-over par 76 that put him at 299, 16 shots behind eventual winner Jason Day of Australia. Had Aquino parred the last two holes, he could have achieved as high as a Top 10 finish.

Still, Aquino's performance was the best by a Filipino in the premier division in more than a decade.

Only the double victory of Castro Villanueva and Nemesio Rivera in 1985 surpasses this year's showing by the RP contingent which is supported by Samsung, Smart Gil, Callaway and Manila Seedlands.

Amelia Monteville, chair of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines, observed promise on the RP kids after showing they can be at par with the world's best.

"I know that they have been training a lot and have been rewarded," she said.

Cash-starved Pinoy is New York's most honest cabbie

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"My mind was racing. I was motivated. I said, 'Okaaay. It's a treasure chest,'" Salgado said the New York Daily News, which reported in its July 15 issue the story of a man it called "New York's most honest taxi driver."

Earning just $80 a day, Salgado found the fourth Pacific Mark pearls worth $70,000 on Wednesday night.

Cabbie's dreams

"I was just astounded when I saw it, and then I said to myself, 'I was nagged today since December, once in Brooklyn and once in [the] Bronx, and they took all my money, maybe this was my payback'," Daily News staff writer Stacey Dillon quoted Salgado as saying.

Tempted for a moment to keep the pearls, Salgado thought of how they could change his life.

One of his dreams is to bring his daughter to the United States when she finishes nursing school back home.

Earning just $80 a day, he fantasized about flying back to the Philippines and selling off the pearls, the daily said.

Tested by God?

He also thought of his unpaid bank rent.

Still, were the pearls worth the loss of something he had always believed in?

Salgado, only two weeks into his job as a cab driver, told the Daily News: "I thought, maybe God is testing me. I kept thinking about what I should do ... but I was raised to be honest and I said: 'I'll make a call to the owner.'"

That was when he realized he could never live with himself otherwise, the Daily News said.

Owner of the pearls

The pearls, Salgado learned later, belonged to Lawrence Pollastro, 47, a hedge fund manager from Rowayton, Connecticut. That Wednesday, Pollastro had picked up the pearls—worn as a necklace and earrings—from a friend's jewelry store.

The Daily News said Pollastro had inspected the pearls with another friend from the women's South Pacific island of Rotuma.

After dinner that night with friends on the city's Upper East Side, Pollastro jumped into a cab—Salgado's—and headed to the Lower East Side.

On reaching his destination, he got off the cab, forgetting his backpack, according to the newspaper.

Salgado parked up another passenger, who told him about the ring.

Cell phone in the bag

When the passenger got off, the cabbie looked to see what was in the backpack.

In the Daily News recounted it, Salgado's jaw dropped when he saw the necklaces—one with a $14,400 price tag—and a large cigar box filled with loose pearls and pearl earrings.

Pollastro's cell phone was also in the bag.

By then, Salgado had made up his mind.

He dialed Pollastro's pre-programmed home number.

'You're my savior'

Salgado insisted on driving the 40 miles to Connecticut to deliver the pearls in person, the daily said.

"Stacey, you're my savior," the Daily News quoted Pollastro as telling the Filipino, bragging that "I really thought the [pearls] were gone for good. It was such a blessing."

"For me, it was a life changing event. It just reestablished my faith in humankind. You're the man! You're awesome. I love New York City," Pollastro said. "I love cabbies."

A clean conscience

Subsequently, Salgado accepted a $1000 reward.

"Money is money, but I have my health and I want to keep my conscience clean," Salgado, who plans to resume nursing school classes in the fall at Bronx Community College, told the newspaper.

"I did the right thing. I'm proud of myself."

He also said he wouldn't trade his life as a cabbie for anything, the Daily News said.

Drive for public awareness an uphill battle for advocates

Front page A1 >

he says, adding:

"Sarah Jane challenged the taboos because of her HIV status, which, by the way, was unconfirmed. Dr. the medical... Many are still in such with the stigma of a person who struggled with HIV/AIDS. That's Sarah Jane."

Harassment to Sarah Jane

A Bicol City committee unexpectedly the construction of a [illegible] for Sarah Jane Reyeros to read Mel, who sentenced HIV as a commercial sex worker.

The proposed monument—of a naked Salome embracing a grave penis, with 13 men surrounding her—was to have been put up on the center island of S.R. Martinez Street and Gil Puyat Avenue in Pasay.

Like the city council that pushed the proposal, AIDS educators of the nongovernment organization Positive Action Foundation Philippines Inc. (Pafpi) believe that building such a monument would hardly be a tribute to Salome.

"Coming out, giving a face to the dreaded disease, and becoming an AIDS spokesperson like Sarah Jane is one way of honoring her memory," says Roberto "Tito" Cuenca, one of the Pafpi's AIDS educators.

Poblete agrees: "With or without a monument, Sarah Jane will always be remembered by the nation for the cause of AIDS awareness. She will also be a symbol of courage for persons with HIV/AIDS."

(Before Salome, there was the late Dolores Cortes, whose struggle with AIDS was featured in the Inquirer in 1992. It was the first time a Filipino with full-blown AIDS came out to tell her story.)

All HIV-positive

Pafpi is optimistic about the Pasay's "new born" and what they can do to make the public aware of the incurable disease.

"They have a different profile," he says. "These are HIV-positive persons who look healthy, just like us. Actually, they are people who are not only physically healthy but who also have a positive outlook on life."

The Pafpi is one of the 20 plus NGOs spreading the word about the importance of prevention and helping improve the quality of life of persons with HIV/AIDS.

In celebration of AIDS education in clubs Luna, Silvino, Roman and Getty

Luna, who hails from Cebu, was infected by her fiancé employer in the United Arab Emirates when repeatedly raped her during a six-month period in 2000.

Roselie, of La Union, was diagnosed with HIV shortly after she broke up with her Filipino boyfriend, whom she met while working as a domestic helper in Hong Kong.

Arman, of Surigao, is virtuosa the health crisis becoming him to his "carefree days" in Saudi Arabia, where he worked as a supervisor of a McDonald's store.

Gary, also of the Bicol region, misses his work in a Greek glass factory but blames unprotected sex for his ailment.

Other stats gathered in AIDS advocacy work are Pinoy Plus, AIDS Society of the Philippines, HIV/AIDS Network Hida, and Samahan ADM Foundation.

Inadequate knowledge

Knowledge of AIDS in the Philippines is "high," according to the 2003 Integrated Demographic and Health Survey.

"The only exception is that both men and women in the lowest income bracket in Muslim Mindanao were less likely to have heard of AIDS," it said.

But the 2002 Young Adult Fertility Survey showed that among young people, knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, was inadequate: At least 25 percent of the respondents thought that AIDS was curable.

In a joint assessment report on the 2nd AIDS Medium Term Plan (2000-2004), the PNAC and United Nations AIDS cited the "lack of a comprehensive advocacy plan" as one of the major constraints in the national response to the epidemic.

They said such a plan should "provide focus, direction and momentum."

Only a shotgun

Here are other PNAC and UN AIDS findings:

- The government budget for HIV/AIDS has been decreasing over the years.

The original amount of P35.40 million for PNAC operations in 1998-99 was cut in 99.1 million in 2000.

The PNAC, a multisectoral and inter-agency body, had long contended that its budget should not be subject to changes in the overall budget ceiling for the Department of Health. But since the PNAC, as provided by Republic Act No. 8504, is attached to the DOH, its annual budget is still part of the DOH allocation and subject to the department's discretion.

Says Poblete: "We have no more control. We're using only a shotgun."

As it is, the PNAC's P1.5-million budget is being used to finance small projects of NGOs and other government agencies.

"Instead of using the national response requires large amounts of investment," the report said, adding that it was "imperative" for the PNAC to draw up a resource-generating plan and to "seek out and maximize its links with the donor community."

- As of December 2003, only a small number of confirmed HIV/AIDS cases had been provided.

and some mid-support, with only 4 percent, or 1,980 cases receiving the necessary drug treatment.

This was attributed to the "poor financial capabilities" of both persons with HIV/AIDS and the government.

There are no plans for the Philippines to manufacture its own anti-retroviral drugs to treat people with HIV/AIDS here and in other Asean countries.

Only a few of the 56 DOH-retained hospitals provides anti-retroviral treatment.

It was also observed that infected persons preferred to seek treatment, care and support in Manila hospitals rather than endure being stigmatized in the countryside.

Risks, failures

- Of the 46 identified HIV high-risk areas nationwide, only 14 have been reached with preventive measures.

More than half (10.3 percent) of the high-risk areas are in Luzon; the rest are in the Visayas (29 percent) and Mindanao (13 percent).

- The provision in RA 8504 (or the AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998) instructing the DOH and the Sanggunian Committee to conduct a feasibility study on possible harm-reduction benefits for people with HIV/AIDS has not been implemented, again because of budget problems.

- The government has failed to fully involve the private and religious sectors in the program. Only nominal efforts were undertaken to mobilize church support during the period 2000-2002.

- The average target of integrating HIV/AIDS information in the secondary and tertiary education programs has yet to be fully realized.

- While substantial work has been done in the workplace, the magnitude of workers both here and overseas and their need for adequate information about HIV/AIDS is simply overwhelming.

"There remains low appreciation of the value of the workplace program on HIV/AIDS among employers," the report said.

Toward the DNAC's promotion of capacity, and said the country's less than ideal performance could be attributed to "structural weaknesses."

The report likewise noted "a perceived low level of support" from the DOH top management to the PNAC. "Resource-wise, this is evident in the secretariat being very limited staff support," it said.

The PNAC groups at least 75 governmental agencies and 31 private organizations.

Nascent epidemic

Findings of the National HIV Sentinel Surveillance from 1997 to 2003 showed that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country stayed below one percent.

But the PNAC and DOH[illegible] said that "while prevalence has been consistent within the [illegible] level, recent data showing an increasing pattern in high-risk behavior implies the possibility of an epidemic remaining a veiled concern."

The National Economic and Development Authority issued this warning in a 2003 progress report on the nation's Millennium Development Goals or MDGs. "The nascent [HIV/AIDS] epidemic in the country has the potential to become a full-blown epidemic, and the Philippines cannot afford to be complacent about the concern less prevalence."

Halting the spread of HIV/AIDS is one of the eight MDGs of UN member-countries. And it is no exaggeration to say that unless the world meets this one, it has little prospect of meeting the others, particularly the ambitious target of cutting extreme poverty by half by 2015.

Palace in South: 'I'll live here'

Front page A1 >

Commissioner Antonio Bernardo and Cebu Governor Billy Ibkar said the BOC would relocate to another building in the Port Area.

The President said she would bring in old furniture from her Quezon City apartment, as well as her longtime housekeepers currently quartered at the Mansion House in Baguio City.

Both the housekeepers and the furniture are from Cebu, she said.

To minimize expenses, Ms Arroyo said she would not order renovations on the building. She said she would suffice to only repair roofs and unroll only have some walls torn down for bigger space.

She also said that she would have the building repainted, and that private parties had promised to donate the paint.

Can't afford 2 buildings

The President said she had abandoned the idea of constructing an entirely new building for Malacañang in the South because a new building would have to be built for the Department of Tourism, which she is relocating to Cebu.

"I can't afford two buildings," she said, adding that the room she could spare for the DOT building was P200 million.

Ms Arroyo said her living quarters would not be ready when she returns at the end of August, in which case she would stay at the nearby parish church.

She dismissed concerns about securing the premises of ambulant vendors and the stink emanating from the surrounding esteros.

"The vendors are here because of customs. When customs leaves, they will go with it," she said.

Ms Arroyo said she could also hold state functions in her extension office.

Not even one percent

Cebu Mayor Tomas Osmeña said Cebuanos did not ask the President to set up Malacañang in the South in the city. Nevertheless, he said, they were happy about it.

"It's not even one percent of Malacañang in the North," Osmeña said. "It's just her way of honoring Cebuanos, and we accept that. But from a structural point of view, it's just an outpost of Malacañang."

Osmeña proposed an alternate site for Malacañang in the South—a new building to be perched on top of the hot to be constructed DOT building at the P20-billion South Reclamation Project on Kawit Island.

Corrections

THE EDITOR on new [illegible] Forces appointments in the July 16 issue of the Inquirer should have referred to Hon Adan Aclaro de los Reyes, not Vice Adm. Ernesto de los Reyes, as the new executive head of staff of the AFP chief. De los Reyes is not the former vice chief. The July 16 issue carried the correct story.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Letty Jimo, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Alexandra Street, Makati City; fax this 897-4792; e-mail address@inquirer.com.ph and dandrade@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Pangalangan, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address ombudsman@inquirer.com.ph.

Nothing to fear in joint RP-US terror training, says military

By Alexis Pope

THE MILITARY yesterday moved to dispel fears that the new round of RP-US joint counter-terrorism exercises to be held at the end of the month in Cagayan, North Cotabato, will lead to the escalation of the conflict with secessionists in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

In response to the fears expressed by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, the other day, military spokesperson Lt. Col. Ernesto Lazaro said that the exercises "is far from that."

"The Balikatan exercises will be confined to Camp Abdul Lazaro (in Cotabato). In addition, there will be a humanitarian component that would go hand in hand with the exercises," Lazaro said.

No objections

He added that local MILF commanders did not object to the holding of the exercises, Gen. Lazaro being a former MILF stronghold.

In fact, Lazaro said, local leaders were consulted on the holding of the exercises and had even wanted the joint training to be held in their area all year round.

"In the case of the other exercises, there was a degree of apprehension. But these were dispelled when the local leaders saw the benefits. There were a few objections from locally elected officials of the Bangsamoro Caucus which has links to the Left," Lazaro said.

The joint exercises in Cagayan are just one in the series of joint training exercises to develop the counter-terrorism capability of Philippine troops. Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander of the US Pacific Command, had earlier expressed concern over counter-terrorism efforts of the Philippine government.

The MILF and the Philippine government are set to start a new round of peace talks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, sometime next month.

Fischer on way to Baguio when nabbed in Japan

BAGUIO CITY—Bobby Fischer, the reclusive former world chess champion, was on his way to this city to resume a radio talk show he hosted two years ago over a local station when he was held by Japanese immigration officials on Wednesday, the lawyers learned on Saturday.

Pablo Mercado, Baguio station manager of Bombo Radyo Philippines, said Fischer sent him an e-mail announcing his return.

Frequent visitor

But the grandmaster was detained by immigration officials at the Narita International Airport. "He stays in Japan," Mercado said.

Fischer was a frequent Baguio visitor, and had been given special prime time coverage by Mercado to discuss his self-imposed exile from the United States.

"Maybe the US finally decided to have him extradited, so it's possible they pulled strings among their political allies like Japan and the Philippines. He was very passionate about the evils of America," Mercado said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said Fischer was never on its watch list. A check by the Inquirer staff both the DFA Records Office in La Union and its bodies in Manila said they were never alerted by US Embassy officials about Fischer's Baguio visits.

Obscure in city

Mercado said Fischer's relative obscurity in Baguio was convenient. Fischer discovered the city through his friend and confidant, Eugene Torre, the Baguio-based Filipino grandmaster and president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

Mercado said Fischer was also drawn to Baguio because it was celebrated for hosting the world chess championship match between staunch Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi at the Baguio Convention Center in 1978.

During an Inquirer interview that was aired live over Bombo Radyo in 2001, Fischer often made anti-Semitic references when speaking about American Jews who were "destroying the world."

He criticized the American government for hiding a conspiracy to defraud and discredit him.

Glad when 9/11 happened

In the same broadcasts, Fischer frequently discussed a mass game he invented, which he called the Fischer Random. He claimed that US businessmen wanted to steal his invention.

"We actually said he was glad when 9/11 (the twin attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001) occurred because he believed the US bombed the hell in the panic," Mercado said.

He said Fischer made five live broadcasts that lasted for three hours since Yates hosted him up with Bombo Radyo in 2000. Fischer recorded all of these broadcasts on compact discs, which he sent to Mercado.

"We hope he makes it back to Baguio. We know he felt safe here," Mercado said. *With reports from Cabrini Pilo/Northern Luzon Bureau*

Meralco seeks new rate adjustment

By Abigail Ho

THE MANILA Electric Co. (Meralco) has asked for a generation rate adjustment mechanism (GRAM) of 27.27 centavos per kilowatt hour for the February to April period, the bill amount to be collected in consumers' monthly electricity bills.

If approved to fulfill the Energy Regulatory Commission, the generation component of Meralco customers' monthly energy bills will go up to P3.49 per kWh from the current P3.22 per kWh.

September pinch

Meralco consumers will feel the effect of that latest GRAM petition, the third that Meralco has requested so far, in higher monthly electricity bills, beginning in September.

The GRAM is a quarterly recovery mechanism that electricity distributors like Meralco are allowed to pass on to their customers to cover the fluctuations in generation charges from the National Power Corp. and independent power producers like First Gas/Meralco Holdings and Quezon Power Phil.

Not going to its coffers

Meralco has emphasized that—not a single centavo of the GRAM-related rate increases goes to its coffers but to the Napocor and the IPPs.

However, it has been noted that Meralco, which is owned by the Lopez family, counts much of its power not from the state-owned Napocor but from independent power producers like First Generation Holdings, the holding company of Lopez-owned energy companies, including Meralco.

Meralco started collecting as much as 11.27 centavos more per kWh from its customers last month when the ERC approved its second GRAM filing, effective for an amount lower than asked for, to cover the months of November and December in 2003 and January 2004.

Beating the tenor of that adjustment were Meralco's commercial and industrial customers which had to shoulder the full 11.27 centavos/kilowatt-plus corresponding franchise taxes.

Entitled to discounts

Residential customers, particularly those consuming 100 kWh or less each month, are entitled to lifeline discounts which serves to cushion the effect of any GRAM-related rate adjustment.

Customers consuming 50 kWh or less each month, whose numbers total 548,131, get a lifeline discount of 50 percent.

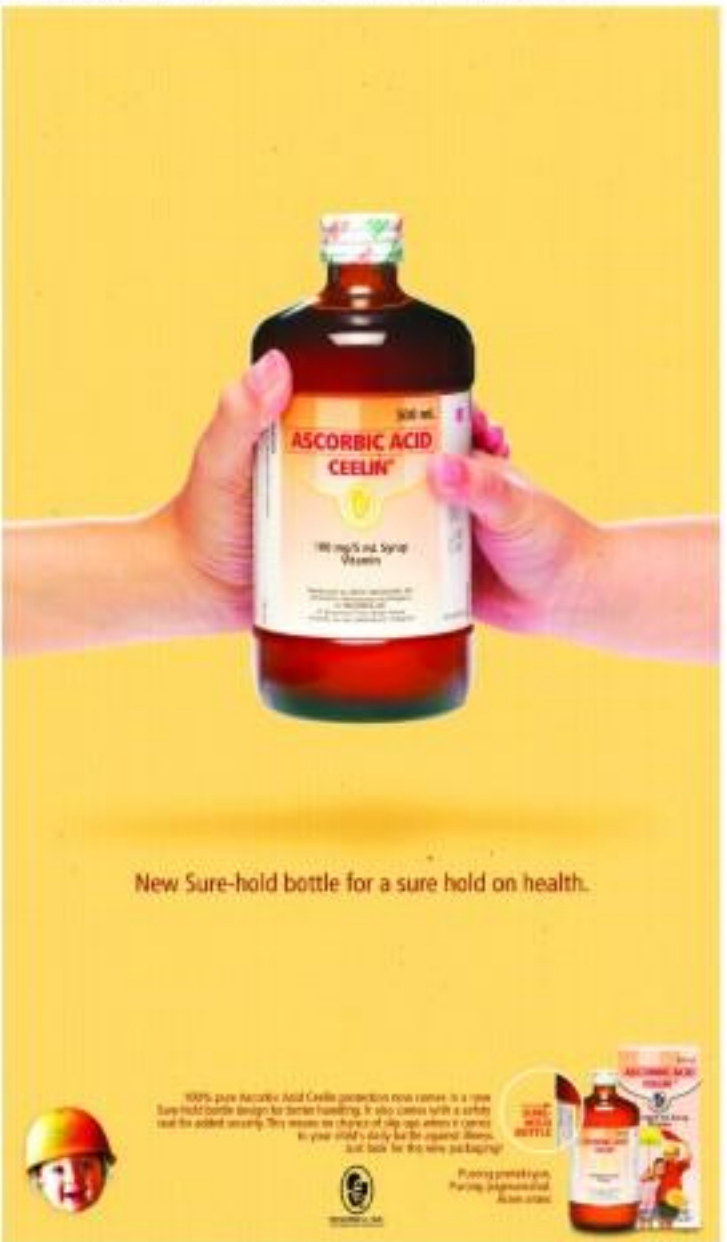
Customers in the 51 to 70 kWh bracket, totaling 285,888 consumers, get a 30 percent discount. Those in the 71 to 100 kWh category, a total of 466,179 consumers, enjoy a 20 percent discount.

Charges not constant

Generation charges do not remain constant as these have to consider fluctuations in fuel prices, the peso-dollar exchange rate and changes in the Napocor and IPP rates.

Meralco's GRAM application states, depending on how these factors move, if these charges go down within a certain quarter, for example, Meralco may be for a GRAM that will reflect zero recoveries for that particular three-month period. This will be reflected in an electricity rate reduction for Meralco consumers.

Unlike the much-derided purchased power adjustment (PPA) charge, which is an automatic monthly rate adjustment mechanism, the GRAM has to be approved by the ERC before it can be implemented.



LA MESA WATERSHED RESORT AND ECOLOGICAL PARK

Paradise redux in the heart of Quezon City

By Tina Santos

AWAY from the pollution and crowded malls, Metro Manila residents may still find "paradise" in the heart of Quezon City.

The La Mesa Watershed Reservoir and Ecological Park in San Fabrician is where one can go to appreciate nature, take a refreshing swim or simply lie beneath the canopy of trees that lets the sunlight through to create dappled shadows on one's face.

The 10-hectare ecopark, 10 hectares of which has been improved and is already functional, lies within the 2,700-hectare La Mesa Dam watershed which lies within Quezon, Caloocan and Marikina cities and Fond province.

A biodiversity assessment of the La Mesa watershed has indicated that visitors can species of plants and animals abound in the place.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte said the ecopark used to be at the center of a tug-of-war between national and local government agencies, including the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the Quezon City government and the Department of Tourism.

Neglected

The park was neglected and was virtually "abandoned" in the "Seventies-remix competition" in the '90s, according to Belmonte, who said that his administration, with the help of various organizations, aimed to spruce it up and give it a total facelift.

"The La Mesa [park] is one of the jewels of Quezon City," Belmonte said, adding that with its restoration, he hoped to maximize its educational value to the local communities and school children.

Except for the swimming pool, which is in disrepair, the ecopark is now again attracting hundreds of visitors a day, said architect Addy de la Rosa, chief of the Quezon City Parks Development Office.

A FAMILY picnics among the trees that breathe fresh air for pollution-wracked and world-weary citizens of Metro Manila in the heart of Quezon City. (See photo)

A fishing and boating area will soon be constructed. "We need to go to Baguio for 'boating,'" quipped De la Rosa.

Reforestation work

The restoration work was contemplated in 2002 by the city government, the MWSS and ABS-CBN's Sunday Kalibutan Foundation with the help of various sponsors and nongovernment organizations.

Tapped to lay down the development master plan was architect and urban planner Jun Palafox and Associates with the collaboration of architect Francisco Mañosa.

Mañosa has a special attachment to the park having done its original design elsewhere in the '70s while he was still a student. The designs for the swimming pool, the bathhouse and the pavilions were used by her father, engineer Manuel Mañosa, who was head of the Manila Seminaries District [now the MWSS], to build the park.

He is financed the city government has started the infrastructure of the park in earnest. Clearing and thinning operations were initially undertaken and the work resumed in full force in January in time for its opening in April, when it host water festivities Metro Manilans.

Old structures

The restoration of the old structures in the park ruins parklet on the rehabilitation of the place, which involves cultural, environmental and community development.

Aside from the swimming pool and bath houses, the newly refurbished ecopark now features hiking and biking trails, a picnic area and playground facilities.

Along with these buildings are numerous smaller structures, such as kiosks, restops, bungalows, gazebos and toilets, which are on their charming Asian designs.

De la Rosa said that since it opened last summer, several workdays of nature "lovers" had been held in the Chinese garden.

Awaiting construction are the museum, amphitheater and artists' village that would serve as a tool for education and nature and art appreciation.

Also, soon to undergo rehabilitation is the reservoir that would serve as the venue for ecological conferences and workshops.

The ecopark will also feature 21 showcase gardens, including an ornithology and hydroponics, bamboo forest, grass lands and an exhibit of various plant species and a butterfly farm.

Rehabilitation effort

So far, the rehabilitation and restoration efforts have cost more than P5 million, but Belmonte said:

"It's an ongoing project. Maybe in a year's time all the proposed facilities will be functional," he said, adding that Vice President Noli de Castro and Senators Loren Legarda and Francisco Pangilinan contributed P1 million each for the development of the ecopark.

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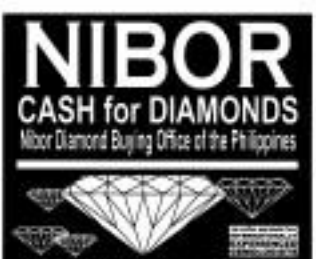

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Explosive chemicals seized

AROUND 100 kilos of "dangerous" chemicals were seized at the Subic port the other day.

Acting on a tip, members of the Philippine National Police Maritime Group confiscated the banned substances from a cargo hauler Gaudem, 41, a passenger on the M. Star the Apostle of Negros Navigation bound for Cagayan de Oro City.

Allegedly found in his possession were two bags of potassium chlorate, two sacks of potassium chlorate, 15 kilos of sulphur, 22 kilos of aluminum sulfate, 20 kilos of foaming blue, and a kilo of yellow powder.

Police said the substances are used in the manufacture of pyrotechnics and as such would not be transported in a passenger vessel.

Investigation showed the goods were covered by a delivery receipt from Bacolod Chemical Supply and were consigned to Delfa Garcia of Kidapawan, Cotabato City. Obviously, Lapuzaya

Marcos victims seek accounting of funds

By Dona Z. Pazdiagan

MARTIAL law victims who won a $2-billion class-suit against the estate of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1995 have demanded an accounting from the government of the $684-million in ill-gotten Marcos wealth recovered early this year.

Marie Hilao-Enriquez, head of a group of claimants, said the government had reneged on its promise to set aside P4 billion (about $71.53 million) from the recovered funds to compensate human rights victims under the martial law regime instituted by Marcos.

Enriquez said the latest word they received from the Department of Budget and Management was that all the recovered assets had been put into the National Treasury's "general fund."

According to Enriquez, the DBM said it could not allot any money to compensate the victims since Congress failed to pass a law on this.

Congress needs to amend the Compensation Agustin-Rebecco Law which states that all the recovered ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses should go to land reform.

Enriquez said the human rights victims had grown tired of waiting for the government to fulfill its "moral obligation" to compensate the martial law victims from the recovered $684 million.

She feared that the recovered funds would disappear once placed in the treasury's general fund.

"The performance of the government in terms of the ($684-million) pitta loto question its sincerity to compensate the victims," Enriquez said in an interview.

"We're demanding an accounting of the funds. There must be money for the compensation," she added.

US Hawaii District Court Judge Manuel Real recently awarded another $40 million found in the Aseana Fiduciaries account of Marcos in partly satisfy the $2 billion award.

Malacañang said that while it welcomed Real's ruling, any compensation for the victims should come from the government.

"We clarify: If the victims would get any compensation if the Aseana funds go to the government," Enriquez said.

Palace orders dismissal of lake authority exec

By Armand N. Nocum

MALACAÑANG has ordered the dismissal of Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) general manager Celinda B. Catapia based on the recommendation of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) which found him guilty of graft.

"The motive and totality of respondent's commission of the aforementioned offenses makes him unfit to remain in public service," Waldo Q. Flores, Malacañang's senior deputy executive secretary, said in a three-page order.

The Palace also ordered the forfeiture of Catapia's retirement benefits and barred him from being employed in any government agency.

Early last year, concerned LLDA employees filed an administrative complaint against Catapia before the PAGC.

The charges against the LLDA general manager included, among others:

- Directly negotiating with 35 fish operators for the payment of fish pens on Laguna Bay resulting in the loss of revenues to the government.
- Reportedly allowing a Taiwanese company, PH-Tai Fishing and Trade Company, to "occupy and utilize certain portions of LLDA facilities" in Calamba, Laguna, without a contract or authority from the LLDA board.
- Reportedly soliciting "patronage from negotiated industries in behalf of PAG Productions Inc. for the promotion of its film entry in the 2002 Metro Manila Film Festival entitled 'Home Alone the Killer.'"

Catapia, however, justified his acts and told PAGC investigators that there was nothing irregular in the "promotional activity" which was intended to "help facilitate elementary concern for the environment."

LLDA vehicles and drivers were allegedly used to deliver the movie tickets to key persons and supporters and collect payment for them, which the PAGC found unreasonable.

"The impropriety of using government property in favor of (the) Productions, a private entity cannot be countenanced as this is prejudicial to the best interest of the service. The very purpose of the use of government property has not been properly served," said the decision signed by PAGC Chair Dario Rama and Commissioner Teresita Salazar.

Rama and Salazar also branded the deal with the Taiwanese firm as "an unconstitutional act" deemed "prejudicial to the government."

"The transaction cannot be tolerated by the commission," the PAGC said in its Dec. 5, 2003 ruling, adding the deal puts the government in "a very disadvantageous situation."

Malacañang also upheld PAGC's order dismissing from the service Joel C. Valdez, president of the trade and investment Development Corp. of the Philippines, for alleged graft.

The twin victories in its fight against graft in government was announced this week by the PAGC.

In an interview, Rama told the INQUIRER that those dismissed may not be the "big fish," noting that up to now, people were hankering for the suspension or dismissal of at least a member of the Cabinet.

Asked if this was going to happen, he replied with a grin: from a pun: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

The PAGC is assuring that its lifestyle check program has only hit middle-level government officials and not higher-ups.

This perception was bolstered when Malacañang's "Committee of Peers" reversed the earlier decision of the PAGC dismissing from the service former lawmakers Fernando Poe and Bernard Bragana on various graft charges.

Women's group marks 57th year

THE ALL Nations Women's Group (ANWG) will mark its 57th anniversary and installation of new officers on July 21 at 2 p.m. at the Shangri-La Hotel Makati with the theme: "Vitality Education Towards a Brighter Future, Outstanding Leadership and a Strong Progressive Republic."

The installing officer and keynote speaker will be Ambassador Arjun Sanders Fabrao of Sri Lanka.

The new officers are: Dina Rosales, president; Lil Arlos, vice president; Lyn M. Mirabueli, recording secretary; Caroline C. Sison, corresponding secretary; Arlene Jacobs, treasurer; Vila Gonzales de Ocio, PRO; Nelle Ten Kiu, internal auditor; and Aileen L.P. Alvarez, Rizelle Marie Espeno, Ilse Nerissa Sharma and Lalie R. Valentino, directors. Honorary directors are Lillie Cuenco de Silva, wife of the Portuguese ambassador, and Valentina Sebagenzo, wife of the Rwandan ambassador.

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Editor Lawrence B. Ibalaya

Justice minister escapes Baghdad car bomb attack

BAGHDAD—A suicide car bomber blew up his vehicle as a convoy carrying Iraq's justice minister drove past in Baghdad on Saturday, killing four people but not wounding the minister, police and US troops at the scene said.

Another car bomb blast in Mahmudiya, just south of Baghdad, killed two Iraqi National Guards men and wounded 25 people, the latest in a series of assaults targeting Iraq's security forces.

Witnesses said the Baghdad suicide bomber drove toward the convoy carrying Justice Minister Malik al-Dohani and then detonated his explosive-laden vehicle.

"There was a blast alongside the convoy. A bomby crashed into some alongside and blew up," said Hussein Abed, a traffic policeman who raced to the scene after the blast.

Abdul Nasser Mohammed, an Iraq bodyguard in the convoy, said four people were killed in the explosion. He pointed at one decomposed car and said: "Two were killed in this car and all we found was body parts."

Five guard cars were blasted across the road, and Iraqis collected human remains from the scene. One bus wrapped up pieces of flesh using two cigarette packets, he Iraqi man suffered minutes on a way nearby residents. Rubble apart from a piece of foot with the big toe still intact.

"What I want to highlight is that this is clearly a terrorist attack by people who do not want to see this country move forward," US Col. Michael Steverson of the 1st Cavalry Division said at the scene.

Unspecified threats and at least eight people were wounded.

"We were working as painters near the ministry house when suddenly there was an explosion," one of the wounded, Khalid Mubarak, said as he lay in a hospital bed. "The glass shattered everywhere, hitting us." Reuters

A VEHICLE belonging to a convoy for the Iraqi minister of justice, Malik Dohan al-Hassan, burns following an attack July 17 in Baghdad. AFP

Al-Qaida threatens bloodbath in Italy

ROME—A statement posted Saturday on an Internet website purportedly from the al-Qaida terror network demanded that Italy withdraw its troops from Iraq, threatening a bloodbath in a series of car bomb attacks.

"O Italian people, your government has participated in the war on Iraq and sent troops and armored to our country. We urge you for the last time to demand that it withdraw peacefully from Iraq," said the statement.

Dated July 17, it was signed "Khaled ibn al-Walid Brigade, al-Qaeda." Its authenticity could not be verified.

"If your government does not obey, the solution lies in names, over six hundred" attacks, the statement said.

A group calling itself the Islamic army in Iraq khaled ibn al-Walid Brigade, is holding a Filipino hostage and has threatened to behead him if Manila does not push forward by a month the withdrawal of its contingent in Iraq.

It was not immediately clear if the same group issued Saturday's statement posted on the website http://www.asiantel.net/vb.

"We have sent messages in the past but the Italian government did not understand because it only understands the language of blood and lead," said the statement. AFP

Palestinians seek UN help in enforcing barrier ruling

JOSÉ MATOS—The Palestinians on Friday asked the United Nations to press Israel to accept a world court ruling and tear down part of its West Bank security barrier, vowing to seek sanctions if it does not comply.

Defeating a draft UN resolution demanding that a hand the court decision, Palestinian representative Nasser al-Kidwa said Israel would become an "outlaw state," if it does not do so.

But Israeli ambassador Dan Gillerman lambasted his remarks, saying that success in the Middle East solver than Israel had no grounds for exercising its self-defense in the law.

For them in "Senate argues about the rule of law or across others of legislations, we have indeed reached a point where the lessons are running in the asphalt, "Gillerman said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has already said he would ignore the non-binding ruling of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the UN's highest tribunal.

The court said Israel must dismantle the parts of the controversial barrier that are built on Palestinian territory and pay the Palestinians reparations for damages.

The General Assembly, which groups all 191 UN member states, is expected to pass the resolution, but Arab nations have been lobbying for days to get the European Union to add its support to the measure. AFP

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Mr. Raymundo T. Tantoco II
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Luncheon Presentation:
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The Next Generation Store: Global Trends in Retailing
Mr. Daniel Hegarty
Consulting Marketing Manager
IBM Corporation (USA)

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Mr. Ernesto Jose S. Reis
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Director, International Retail Management Consulting (India)

The Battle for the Customer's Share of Life
Mr. J. Richard Stiefens
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Winning Trends in Advertising & Promotions
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Martha Stewart comeback expected

NEW YORK—Martha Stewart could yet make a comeback as a lifestyle guru after receiving a unanimous sentence for lying to federal prosecutors, experts said on Friday, but her return to the helm of the company she founded is far from guaranteed.

Shares of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia Inc. rose 37 percent after the sentencing on Friday, on hopes Stewart would soon return to the media and exert her dazzling powers to help the firm's ailing business.

Legal and brand experts said the sentence means Stewart would soon be cooking up a humiliation or tiling a bathroom for fans who never stopped adoring her, but she still faces hurdles for returning as a full-fledged company officer.

Bryan Roth, vice president of marketing at brand consultancy Landor Associates, said investors and supporters would view the minimum sentence as an endorsement of Stewart's potential, allowing her brand to withstand her prosecution.

"Her character will be reinstated for Stewart, whose company homebrand cased investor media coverage of her legal travails and turned pure speculation that her brand was finished.

"If she does continue to behave with dignity and in the classic mold Martha, she could actually come out stronger," Roth said. "She'll benefit and her business will benefit because she'll be back on top of it."

US District Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum sentenced Stewart to five months of prison and five months of house arrest, the minimum sentence allowed by law. Stewart, 62, was also fined $30,000. She was convicted in March for lying about a suspicious stock trade and could have been sentenced to up to 16 months in prison.

"I'll be back," Stewart told media and supporters outside the New York City courthouse. "I'm used to all kinds of hard work, as you know, and I'm not afraid."

STEWART wants to make a statement after her sentencing July 16.

Stewart has vow to consider charges against her by the Securities and Exchange Commission, which were put on hold pending her criminal case. If she reaches an SEC settlement, it could bar her from serving as a director or officer for at least several years, legal experts said.

As controlling shareholder, Stewart retains substantial influence. She can maintain communication with her company in jail, and even review her suspended television show on home decorating and cooking, legal experts said.

"There's nothing illegal in her voting her influence she wants," said John Coffee, a professor at Columbia Law School.

"She can have behind-the-scenes control," Martha Stewart Living shares closed up $3.17 or $11.81 in on the New York Stock Exchange, after reading $12.25, their highest level since her conviction. Reuters

Rebels free brothers held for 3 years

MANIA, Colombia—During the three years they were held by rebels in malaria-infested jungle camps, the young Lozada brothers learned rain-drenched nights, hunger and humiliation, but never lost hope of one day seeing their family again.

Monday was the moment and a five-day trek across steep paths and swollen rivers, the brothers finally reunited home this week, the instant of feeling joy, they thought mostly of their mother, a soap-saleswoman, still limpishing in veiled hatred.

"We don't want to celebrate or have a party until she is free," Juan Sebastian Lozada, 18, said in an interview Friday with The Associated Press at his house in the southern city of Neiva.

In the same luxury apartment, leftist rebels detained as police officers dragged him, his brother Jaime Felipe, now 20, and their mother, Gloria Polanco, from their beds on the night of July 20, 2000. The daring abduction sent fear through urban Colombians and brought a conflict mainly fought in the countryside to their doorsteps.

The rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, took the family deep into the group's southern stronghold before separating Polanco from her sons six months later.

"They came for her one night and told us she was going to give an interview before being released, and that we would be released shortly afterward," Jaime Felipe said. "We knew they were lying. It was the worst moment. All I could do was cry."

The FARC, which has huge hundreds of people every year as part of its 40-year old struggle to topple the government, has included Polanco on a long list of "political prisoners" it wants to exchange for jailed rebels. Three US citizens contractors captured in February 2003 are also on the list.

The brothers said the rebels never let them out would sometimes torment them by depriving them of reading material or board games, but long stretches or falsely promising them imminent release.

But they were always permitted to listen to newscasts on a crackly radio, their only contact with the outside world.

"The only time I felt happy was when I would hear my father's voice. It gave us strength," Juan Sebastian said.

Jaime Lozada, a former senator and ex-governor convinced that the FARC contacted him shortly after his wife and sons were seized and demanded $500,000 for their release.

"It was an absurd sum. Nobody has that kind of money in Colombia," Lozada said. AP

A RELATIVE of a victim of the fire cries over a grave in a burial ground, July 17.

5 arrested in India school fire

KUMBAKONAM, India—Parents broke down in tears as the bodies of their children were buried or cremated on Saturday after a fire in an Indian school killed 90 children.

"He is gone, he is gone forever," wailed Dipya as she and herself to her 8-year-old son Vadivelu, who died of his burns in hospital on Friday. "I had prepared his afternoon meal for him, but he will never eat it."

At least 35 people gathered outside her house to console Dipya and her husband Gokhan, a manual laborer. The scene was repeated in dozens of locations across the little town of Kumbakonam, which lies in a fertile district known as the rice bowl of the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

The bodies of 75 children were cremated from site for Krishna school after the fire on Friday, another 15 children, most just 8 or 10 years old, died of their burns in hospital, senior district official J. Radhakrishnan told reporters.

Radhakrishnan said five people, including the school principal and the cook, were arrested. Authorities are also investigating why no teachers were killed or injured in the fire.

Action has been taken as they did not follow fire safety norms," he said, adding that regulatory authorities were also guilty in blame for failing to endorse safety norms.

The blaze began in a kitchen where Friday's lunch was being prepared before spreading to the school's palm-thatched roof.

Many of the children were trapped in a large classroom which had only one exit, dying after the blazing roof collapsed on top of them and blocked their way out.

"The kids were too small to break down the wall or think of any way out," said Sulo, a 35-year-old father of two, whose children were among the eight on an other floor and escaped unhurt.

"The government is to blame as there has been no inspection of this school by it or anyone to these years. If someone had inspected the building, maybe they might have pointed it out to the school management, and this might have been avoided."

Newspapers criticized the lack of adequate exits and fire safety guidelines as well as the fact that cooking was being carried out in such a disordered way.

The Dravidanadi nomination and burial ground in the town stayed open overnight as attendants hunted or burned the bodies of dozens of children killed in the blaze.

"At least 20 of the bodies that have come here were in the 5-10 year age group," said burial ground owner Subramaniyan.

"The parents are rushing through their last rites as they can, not bear to look at the charred bodies any more."

As 11-year-old Kumar's body was lowered into a grave, his father slipped in the ground to grief. A mourner said the girl had escaped the fire only to go back into the building to save all seven sisters her books.

"She was very scared that her parents would scold her for losing the books," he said.

There were at least a dozen bodies in the grave beside Dhanam's.

A short distance away in a compound adjacent to the burial ground, there were at least 35 piles of smoking ashes, the remains of cremated children. Wet piles of firewood were stacked nearby in preparation for more corpses.

"Some of the parents are so shocked that they do not know what they are doing or saying," said minister S. Raman, a 40-year-old army moral doctor.

"I believe they would normally locate the bodies of their dead relatives here buried them tonight. Some parents are saying that cannot bear to put their loved bodies into fire again." Reuters

S. Asia floods displace 21.5M

DHAKA, Bangladesh —Rescuers struggled Friday to reach remote areas in South Asia submerged by the worst flooding in months by two decades that has left hundreds dead and millions stranded across the region.

Surging river waters have inundated wide tracts in Bangladesh, eastern India and Nepal following torrential monsoon rains that have battered the region since mid-June, displacing around 21.5 million people.

In Bangladesh police said 44 people drowned when rescue boats from the swollen Jamuna river broke through an embankment Wednesday in Sirajganj district, submerging a town that was Dhaka. AFP

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Brazil rips Poland in Grand Prix

ALEKSANDRA Przybyz of Poland spikes over Brazil's Fabiana Claudino and Dagoa in yesterday's game.

Political exercise untimely—Puyat

Ateneo crushes UST

By Jasmine W. Payo

GRITTY forward JC Intal delivered an all-around performance as he led the Ateneo de Manila University over the University of Sto. Tomas, 83-78, yesterday in the 67th UAAP senior basketball tournament at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Blue Eagles upped their record to 2-0, tying the Tigers with no one-1-1 time.

In the other senior game, veteran Rudy Hufalde scored a career-high 28 points to the University of the East combined the University of the Philippines, 63-56.

28 men have 1-1 record, while EP dropped its second game in as many outings.

A more heated matchup is expected today as defending champion De La Salle University meets perennial Final four contender De La Salle University at 4 p.m.

Ateneo, meanwhile, hopes to get back in winning form as it tackles National University in the other senior game at 2 p.m.

"I'm [more] nervous, [as] by [nine] and [eighteen] Larry Fonacier took things in the first quarter after blowing three 12-point halftime leads.

The Tigers' Christian Lauzon and Arnel Vincent gave the Eagles a scare midway into the third quarter as they trimmed the Eagles' lead to two points, 53-51.

Intal finished with 14 points, including a jam in the final minute that gave Ateneo a 76-68 advantage. Rookie added 13 points.

"EDT is a very dangerous team. They have a big fighting heart. We know it would be hard. But our teammates really played very well. It's a good start, things are going our way so we'll take advantage of that," said new coach Sandy Arespacochaga.

Ateneo has now won five straight games over UST, dating back to 2001.

The crowdfull UE Warriors were at the helm right from the tip-off and led by as much as 12 points. Forward EC Cansdera was also a force at the defensive end as he blocked six shots and pitched in six boards.

"I'm always very happy with my players, the veterans played well. We had an aggressive defense. We're a small team, but our advantage is our speed and agility," said rookie coach Nicole Pacinzon, a 43-time assistant Lang in the PBA.

Following a league play, the Blazers scored 21 points for the UP Fenix, as they shrugged reigning junior champs Ateneo Blue Eagles, 72-66.

Ateneo (83)
**Intal 28, Rookie 13, Fonacier 11, Lauzon 11, Vincent 7, Cansdera 6, Cortez 5, Ildefonso 2, Ramos 0, Ramirez 0, Ramos 0, Ramirez 0, Ramos 0, Ramirez 0

ISSN 0116-2442 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Vol. 19/No. 221

OPINION

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Two worlds

EDITORIAL

AIDS 2004 in Bangkok, an extraordinary gathering to advance the global response to HIV/AIDS, came to an end on July 16. It was a massive meeting, with its share of revelations and controversy. The delegation from the People's Republic of China, 300 strong, for one, impressed the world by its candor concerning the HIV/AIDS crisis in China, which as recently as 2003 had been declared nonexistent by the government. In contrast, the policies of the US government, which has targeted funds for allocation to selected countries, were criticized in some who would prefer that the United States contribute to the global fund against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria instead.

In tackling these questions—China's previous reticence and America's favoritism—among so many other challenges, the conference underlined the difficulty being faced by the global fight against HIV/AIDS when pride and status get in the way of saving lives.

Similarly our country is torn between the necessity of saving lives and pursuing ideals that, while generally honorable, sometimes ironically slow down the effort to save lives.

In a scientific series Stephen Jay Gould once argued that however science and religion, there should be no fight. He explained that they are of two worlds, or rather, that they belong to two different, though not mutually incompatible, magisteriums, or traditions of teaching and authority. He said that there is a point where science ends and faith begins, and where faith exists, it does not mean that there is no room for science. What is required is respect between those who only believe in one or the other, and also respect for those who would believe both. Science and religion operate according to different laws, so that science which depends on the scientific method deals with phenomena and principles according to its own criteria, while religion tackles questions and principles which science is as incompetent to address as religion is when it comes to, say, the particulars of quantum physics.

This respectful delineation of magisteriums is relevant now, because we are a country facing scientific challenges yet we have an overwhelmingly religious population.

The scientific fight against HIV/AIDS is premised on two parallel efforts. The first is to prevent people from coming down with the disease; the second, is to find a cure. Scientific efforts supported by many NGOs focus on providing the public with one of the most powerful weapons in disease prevention: information. Information sharing requires a tolerant, non-judgmental attitude that does not put any moral odium on a person's lifestyle choices, but aims, instead, to provide that person with the means to live a responsible lifestyle that protects him from being infected and, in turn, infecting others. The scientific fight informs people of the consequences of sharing needles, or of unprotected sex. It does not, because it feels it cannot, prevent or actively discourage people from taking drugs or engaging in sex.

On the other hand, the religious attitude toward HIV/AIDS prevention is reactive or reinforcing moral rules that view certain lifestyles and acts as condemnable, and which reserves a degree of moral justice to those who curse them; with the disease as a result of behavior it views with disapproval. Some religions reserve a kind of pity or compassion for those who go against its rules and become diseased, but this is an attitude beyond science's ethical concerns.

Too much energy is being wasted in government, for example, being fearful of religious teachings, and the authorities of religion in turn being wary, if not hostile, to the scientific approach. In truth, there is a common ground between the two approaches, and that is in the realm of the person's private conscience, which both religion and scientists in general admit are paramount. By this we mean that many religions recognize that in the end, a person is accountable directly to his Maker and that he has the freedom to follow his own conscience. The state and scientists, too, respect and recognize in most instances, the freedom of an individual to use conscience as a guide to action or non-action.

Therefore, churches may preach what they want to preach, but scientists and the state must also be free to inform. The individual bears the burden of decision, and churches, the state and scientists should be able to respect their populations enough to grant them the widest latitude in reaching an informed, and conscientious, choice, concerning protecting themselves and others from HIV/AIDS.

Agenda for the Senate

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

The other point I want to raise about the Senate has to do with its present membership. That house was not raised during the campaign, principally because the elections had yet to decide which of the opposing camps would become the new majority. Save time, 14 senators are from the administration, there is talk of a reorganization of the Senate.

This should not be disturbed even such report for leadership is a legitimate ambition of every politician. There is no doubt that Sen. Manuel Villar, who used to be the Speaker of the House of Representatives, fund spurred the impeachment of President Estrada) has a right to aspire for the position of Senate President Franklin Drilon.

But the supposed proposed resolution of the senator is disturbing for another reason.

There are reports that the friendly consensus between the two will be settled in the same way the dispute between Drilon and the late Sen. Nene Pimentel was supposed to be solved. Drilon was to serve time for a period of 12 months, to be replaced afterwards by Pimentel, who would serve for the rest of the term. The only trouble was that Pimentel was never able to enjoy the agreement because he died, and Drilon continued to occupy the Senate presidency.

I believe that the agreement was unethical and would not have been achieved by senators of justice. The subject of the contract was a public office, which is not a commercial commodity that can be negotiated like a piece of land or a share of stock. A public officer cannot be appointed to money and is not even a property right. It is a special privilege granted by appointment or election of an individual on the basis of his qualifications.

In Santa v. Sindico, 107 Phil. 336, two persons, vying for their party's nomination appointed to a contract that the loser would run for as a vice candidate. The loser reneged and the official candidate sued. The lower court dismissed the complaint and the Supreme Court affirmed. Justice Ulo Reyes declared that the agreement did not have a lawful subject.

The proposed compromise between Drilon and Villar is to my opinion a derogation of public office. And we are talking of not just any public office but one less than the Senate presidency. It is beyond the competence of men and may not be surrendered or bargained away like chattel or investments. Any one who regards it less than that is not worthy to occupy it.

The system of the Senate president is not fixed by the constitution or by the majority of the senators in their discretion. It may last for only one day or even one hour; on the other hand, it may continue indefinitely as long as the incumbent enjoys the confidence of his colleagues. The duration of that confidence may not be guaranteed by the will of the majority or even only by gentlemen's agreement. It may be cut short at any time.

Drilon and Villar may settle their issues without the cheap compromise of dividing the term between them like a responsible members of services. Silverio may also should occupy the disputed position indefinitely unless the majority of his colleagues lose their confidence in him and decide to replace him, and not necessarily with his former rival.

Such treatment of the Senate presidency should remove it from the disputatious atmosphere of the cheap cockpit and give the position the respect and importance it deserves as the third highest office in the government.

Are you busy?

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

"TIS STUFF is said that when you know who won the mayor of you know actors, he was elected by the people," but what was that? The mayor got angry and said: "Yes, I'm not his, I'm mayor, and don't you forget it!"

* * *

In Today's Gospel (Lk. 10, 38-42), Jesus reminds us through Martha and Mary that we should work not only FOR Him but ultimately WITH Him. He wants not only our hands, but our hearts as well. Mission is not only in doing, but also in just simply being. If you are getting to be so busy and have no more time to be with the Lord in prayer, something is wrong somewhere. Are you very, very busy? Maybe you have fallen in a heresy and so a heresy that you are indispensable.

* * *

Martha was busy, while Mary was attending to our guests. Are you very busy? Martha who was "troubled in many things" and asked with envy "why has sister left me to serve alone?" All is fair in love, for there is love not only in doing, but also in being. Work and prayer are like the wings that help us fly. Are you overworking and "underpraying"?

* * *

In God's heart, the good and the good-for-nothing are equally loved. That's because God is not a saint. The world says, "Why you are such a good-for-nothing, you're okay!" But what if you will no longer be of any use and have become a liability like when you grow old or sick? Will you not separate be okay? Martha has the depth of God's love; a person's worth is not only in what he does, but also even if he does not. Do you see others and yourself in terms of utility? Can you accept a God who loves you and me even if we do nothing, achieve, perform, or function?

* * *

Somebody said that at the end of our lives, none of us will regret that we did too much enough or that we spent too little with our work. We will surely regret that we did not spend more time with the sweet little things in life like family, friends, health, nature, people and prayer. On the end, may we too end up saying "Lord, you have loved I known thee..."

* * *

Time spent with yourself, with people and with your food is not "wasted" time. When was the last time you took a walk and just enjoyed the earth? When was the last time you played with children, or just simply relaxed? When was the last time you took down before God, and just thanked Him that you are still alive? When was the last you "wasted" time on Sunday's which has been created sometime, as of no consequence and of no importance?

* * *

More and more, I look forward to my daily walks where I can be alone, and just be. Such moments are not only physically beneficial, but very refreshing for the soul as well. With the rush and experience peace. Run the rush and experience peace. Take time to commune with nature and with God. Be good to yourself. Find time, and make time to "waste" time with yourself and with people.

* * *

My father was a very busy man, but he always found time for prayer and quiet. He day started with a dawn rosary with Mama and a Mass. I believe that what helped him keep his sanity and integrity in a place like the Bureau of Customs were those short moments of quiet prayer in the course of his work. On top of his desk was the prayer: "Lord, be with me today guide me in all my decisions and actions. Amen." May we all find time to stop, pause and pray, and become aware of the presence of God in our busy day-to-day lives.

This reminds me of a story of a family in a hotel room getting ready for a party. The TV was on, the children were running around, the radio was on the phone and the husband was frantic looking for his wife watch. Soon the whole family was turning the whole place upside down looking for the wife watch. The father shouted, "Let's all shut up and be still!" In the silence that ensued, they finally heard the ticking of the wife watch. They heard the ticking just because they stopped and listened down.

We don't have to wait for the Sabbath or "silence" by means of sickness, misfortunes and death before we listen and reach down to the ticking of our hearts within. If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart.

* * *

We take this today to acknowledge the many unsung heroes in our midst, especially the sick and the elderly who may no longer be useful to the rest of the world, but are so precious to God's heart? It is they who know the very treasures of God's love.

* * *

The power of prayer is at work again. We, as a people and as a nation, have begged for the life of Angelo de la Cruz who was thrown count with beheading in Iraq. De la Cruz's only fault was being poor, which compelled him to go on another country to find work. As we pray for De la Cruz, we pray for all overseas Filipino workers who are braving deprivation and even persecution on them. May the time come when no Filipino will HAVE to go abroad just to find work.

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, thank you for loving me even when I'm busy, even when I'm "busy." Amen.

The resurrection of Angelo Reyes

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

(AFP Membership as part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima, opened, this time for Bishop A. Fitz Emma, Bishop of the Province of Infanta, unveiled a 16-foot high bronze statue of St. Teresa of Avila. She is remembered as the "Doctor of Prayer." She is considered the founder of the Discalced Carmelites and is one of the great reformers of the Order. In 1970, she was conferred a Doctor of the Church.

In the midst of the Cabinet reunion last October, Angelo Reyes has brought an ordinary secretary into the meeting before requesting his so-called "treasure" to see Boni Serrano, he was also facing accusations of impropriety in secret meetings in the Senate, rumor have been raised the issued pertinent to his cabinet. Perhaps, to boost his morale, President Arroyo designated Secretary Reyes as a roving ambassador of solidarity to Iraq.

Secretary Reyes is both in the corridors of power. He is also said to be most trustworthy and he will now have the luxury of choosing which calls to take and which to ignore. He also will not have to line up for his meals, and people will be bowing at our feet while trying to anticipate and provide for every need.

There are two important issues to be learned from Reyes' experience. First, when women in any institution have to use sex to get ahead, something is here our country are the mission involved. In the past, there have been all kinds of anti-kidnapping units assembled to address the problem but none of them had as much success and credibility as the Task Force Rescue. Even the police operations have been under threat, there is every reason to hope and believe that kidnappings will be minimized. Otherwise, people will feel that the success of the anti-kidnap campaign is a sham and that the entire campaign, instead, proves to be nothing and also fleeting. Some people think power is forever and that accordingly follow they leave, they are unable to cope with reality and become completely disconnected with sometimes fatal results.

In the case of Reyes, he didn't allow disappointments to keep him down and his patience and perseverance paid off in the form of another Cabinet level opportunity to serve the nation. It is not often that one gets such a second chance in life, sometimes I am reminded of former US President Jimmy Carter whose governorship was overshadowed by the Iranian hostage crisis. In 1980, he lost in his re-election bid by one of the largest margins in history. But what some would view as failure, Carter saw as a chance to launch a new career for himself. He has since been an effective promoter peace and democracy in places like Somalia, Haiti, El Salvador and the Middle East, and is the building of houses for the homeless. In 2002, Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Two weeks ago, even before formally assuming his new post, Reyes launched his counterattack by announcing that he lowered the negotiations of ransoming the Philippine Peacekeepers in Iraq. Reyes, in fact, has the least to simply stress, saying that anything illegal is a potential source of corruption. If *jueteng* was legalized, it would mean additional revenue for the government.

I agree with Reyes on *jueteng*. There have been so many anti-*jueteng* drives in the past which may have yielded some temporary gains, but after ending all pretense, the racket would resume with even greater intensity. I would rather have our limited police resources utilized in the war against illegal drugs. To my mind, that is the greater danger facing our nation. We must live with *jueteng*. The answer continues to see our youth being trapped in a life of addiction to drugs.

Unfortunately we lack the political will to confront this problem realistically, and even some Reyes has started to espouse bizarre policy statements. Rather than any long term solution, we shall probably see more of the periodic anti-*jueteng* activities launched by police units in order to quiet criticism from the Church and civil society groups.

Judging Imelda

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

(a People Power uprising.

Agabon Imelda's accuser lifted with hyperbole and self-serving influence to her presidency for "beauty, truth and service," are bolstered convictions from other sources. American officials who dined with the Marcoses in the palace, friends and associates, including Ian Sandberg, publicist hired to the anti-Marcos opposition, Supreme Commander Gonzalo de Quiroz who was in charge of the Marcos files, Ambassador who were also married late detainees and former victims. There is even a man who served as a juror in Mr Marcos' indictment trial and so obviously confuses with Marcos' crimes how he exercises the unexplained glories she gave him...this he should have been expected at the contest by the prosecutors.

This is not to say though, that the documentary is a one-sided fest of condemnation and vilification. One morning during the show, viewers of the cinematographer they were open to discover that Mr Marcos had left an 1 campaign outfit inviting Mrs Aquino to the Presidency and had made them about the same. Others, at both, they are the middle or the Bonnadilla voters in Ohu, asking our cadre of Imelda's old goons for stirring (drying). These views of the Filipino community in Honolulu, Hawaii, are also long-term balcony rallies and chairs are interspersed with scenes of shanty communities along the railroad tracks, and the farmers and children in their baked rag-a-day fifty dockers.

REMINDED of the audience in the "Imelda" great promise alternately laughed, endured, hissed and cursed during the two hours of the filming.

The footage leaves the viewer, especially one who lived through the Marcos years, with a sense that the viewers' strong against personal experience and memory in what kind of alternate universe was she living in, one wonders. The destruction of martial law, the victims, and an expression of her husband's "constitutional authoritarianism" And when she was sent off on diplomatic missions to Cuadhafi, Mao and Pope Caetlin, it was to ensure that "national" fascination did not trouble martial law. The "peaceful revolution" of People Power was more divine and effective. He sounds we're still too close today with the consequences of such botched diplomacy.

The second revelation is curiously foreseen in the words of Imelda, her children and their followers those days. During a recent personal encounter, for instance, the viewers brought out a huge album of clippings, documents, letters and photos that, she gushed, proved the "truth" of her and her husband's innocence in all the charges leveled against them. What would impel someone to lug along such a bulky mass, even on a birthday party, I wondered.

* * *

Still so, finally more than curiosity, piqué, amusement or annoyance, one feels endless resentment at the end of "Imelda." Undeniably, some may be moved by the film to admire Imelda's spirit. But what kind of people could tolerate the triumphant account of a family which they had endured in a "peaceful" revolution less than a decade earlier? What kind of people, knowing what they know, would endure for their political reconversion after they had done the country so much wrong?

Near the end of the film, Mr Marcos is shown rejoicing at the return of the Philippines and issues, running for governor and congressman respectively are being interviewed. Imelda is delighted and obviously proud of her children as they deftly evade the interviewer's more embarrassing questions. One can only imagine what those words look like today. Vindicated? In her children's political fortunes, though history's judgment is still under dispute and negotiation.

Saving Ms Arroyo

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

be measured inevitably against the dangers our own nationals face when they are perceived as citizens of an enemy nation. So in Cena's case remains any question about the wisdom of the efforts of George to flush your two days will immediately see the folly of a President who maliciously gambles the lives of her own citizens just to please Washington.

And that's the reality of a politically insecure President who has the unenviable task of explaining and justifying the Philippines' continuing involvement in a war that is growing increasingly unpopular with the majority of the American people. Since the May '10 election, we've had to endure every valuable occasion in search of a spark. The President's victory at the polls remains shrouded in doubt. While the nation slept, Mr Arroyo's allies in Congress hurried to railroad the passage of the Code of conduct of Conduct that many think have been flawed. The rewriting to draw protection has cost in most of divergence of the country including fellow Muslim. The last thing she needs today is an impeachment trial that could paralyze the country. The decision to quit as the image from this is as much about saving the presidency of Mr Bush as it is about saving the life of Ms Cena.

The unanswered question of these three political and geographical realities—an unpopular war, a beleaguered Filipino OFW and apprehensive American President—lends a unique quality to this crisis. The situation would have been different if the victim had not been an OFW but a member of the Philippine peacekeeping contingent. There would still

be heated talk to withdraw the troops, but the government would not have felt as strongly pressured. Similarly, if the Cena's abductors had demanded the release of a Filipino terrorist serving time in the United States, the government would certainly have been more hesitant.

The only consideration we can derive from all this is that we are made aware once more of our responsibility to protect our nationals wherever they may be. It also behooves people to think twice in other countries. Thirty years after embarking on a robust export program, I think we're not fully realized what that demands in terms of enforcement in foreign policy and in the conduct of our citizens abroad. The first obligation of a government is always to its people, wherever they may be. A president who forgets this will not be around for long.

* * *

Comments to—farolan@pudnet.com

When life is at stake

(If rejected, the media issued a boast when the government imposed a curfew blackout on its offices to free Angelo de la Cruz from his kidnappers in Iraq.

The usually accessible presidential spokesperson made themselves scarce to the reporters. Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo avoided contact with the media. The task of keeping the public informed about the developments in De la Cruz's case was assigned, curiously enough, to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

COMMENTARY

Raul J. Pangalangan

In times past, the Department of Labor and Employment and other Overseas Workers Welfare Administration acted as lead agencies whenever overseas Filipino workers got into trouble elsewhere in the world. But this time, Labor Secretary Patricia Santo Tomas' boobies in prominently announcing the release of De la Cruz days later underlined on the President's decision to exclude her ex officio from the national disaster response process.

Runaway vow to focus on their standing as diplomats, the DFA's press statements have been guarded and terse. The words and phrases Foreign Secretary Delia Albert used were carefully chosen to convey exactly the message it wanted to send to the public and, more importantly, the kidnappers.

Some TV reporters complained about being barred in stage all night right in the DFA premises, and at the Crisis Special Economic Team in Bangunga where the family of De la Cruz are holed up, to get the latest developments on the hostage crisis only to wait in front empty handed.

Setting aside the inconveniences caused by the news hawks, the government cannot be faulted for its refusal to give the public a blow by blow, step by step minute account of the steps it is undertaking to secure the release of De la Cruz.

Human life

A human life is involved. De la Cruz's kidnappers are people who have shown by their past acts that they have no qualms about befriending their victims even if the whole world pleads for mercy. Rational reasoning on his part definitely ends.

A statement by a government official about the incident that is taken out of context or given a slant different from what was intended may send the wrong signals to the kidnappers. Worse, an errant word or phrase may put Cruz in a rage with disastrous results ahead of the deadline they imposed.

It would be the height of stupidity for the government to publicly disclose its negotiating strategy as the channels it's using to persuade the Kidnappers to free him. That would be like telegraphing to your enemy your battle plans; a big no-no in any hostage situation.

And don't forget that the lethal spot is other disciplines and moderate secrecy in the handling of information on De la Cruz's case that may come their way? With viewership or readership ratings at stake, not to mention the additional tension between media outlets, that may be difficult to achieve.

Let us not even discount the possibility too that the kidnappers have sympathizers in the Philippines, who can immediately pass on to them information disclosed by the local media that can help the terrorists accomplish their objective. All it takes to do that is scroll phone with long distance communications capability.

Live coverage

Live coverage of hostage situations is not new to us. It is observed by local radio and TV stations when they cover incidents of a similar nature. The broadcasters refrain from airing the location of the responding police station or their plans to immobilize the hostage taker if the threat to the life of the victim is imminent. They do not allow the hostage to take radio or watching television while holding on to his hostage.

The same kind of discipline is followed in hostage-for-ransom cases for reasonable media motives. They do not disclose information, such as, the paying capacity of the victim's family or the arrangements police are using to track down the kidnappers (who may exchange) the victim's life.

The media's coverage of the Angelo de la Cruz hostage-for-ransom and hostage-taking incidents can be attributed to the unilateral implementation of a news blackout by media outlets while the rescue operation is in progress. It's only after the victim has been rescued or/and the suspect is in police custody that the public hack information is fully disclosed to the public.

If consideration for the safety of the hostage or hostage-taker is a justifiable reason for a news blackout in the local scene, there is no reason why the same principle cannot apply to a Filipino who suffered the misfortune of being into the hands of terrorists in a foreign country.

Most of us, when the safety of a loved one are literally lined up against the government. One inaccurate news report or confidential information that finds its way into wrong hands may make the right young children of De la Cruz hapless orphans.

Right to information

That the public has the right to know what's going on in the affairs is no more the virtues of De la Cruz than his abductors is not in question. It is part of the right to information about matters of public concern that the Constitution guarantees Filipino citizens.

But that right should not be taken to mean that everything about the hostage situation should be extended to the public NOW! In the first place, the right is not absolute; it is subject to limitations provided for by law, such as, national security or confidentiality of executive documents.

The sensitivity of the hostage problem demands that the details about its handling are revealed on a need-to-know basis. Only those who are directly involved in the negotiations should be privy to the details of the latter. Those who have nothing to contribute to its peaceful resolution should keep their mouths shut and let the assigned parties do their work without any interference.

Publicity seekers and klibitzers (which this country is having a world cup), as the saying goes, only "spoil the broth." The same goes with media organizations as bidding for exclusive and kidnapping cases, who can step out the right course of action for the safe release of De la Cruz.

The full story about the hostage crisis can be written and talked about later, when he has returned to his family in God forbid, when the worst ends in a manner that will in no way endanger his life, the government should be allowed to study his release with the requirements of patience and normal planning from the sidelines.

There are other equally important issues of the day that the media can better their attentions on while the hostage issue for the safe release of De la Cruz.

The INQUIRER is a member of the
PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE
"The National Association of Philippine Newspapers"

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to: inquirer@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Juan V. Bautista Jr.

Are OFWs fair targets of Iraqi guerrillas?

THE SUPPORT President Macapagal-Arroyo has given US President George W Bush for invading Iraq last year even without UN approval marked the Philippines as an enemy of Iraqis opposed to the US-led occupation of their country.

The Philippines has supported the occupation in word and deed. It sent a 51-member contingent to the war-ravaged country.

The Philippine government is apparently using its membership in the "coalition of the willing" to gain economic concessions from the United States, including employment opportunities for Filipinos and contracts related to the reconstruction of Iraq.

Some 4,000 Filipinos are now working in US military facilities in Iraq, mainly as servants, cooks, maintenance personnel, and drivers.

They would rather face suicide bombings, mortar attacks and ambushes than starve in the Philippines. A Filipino worker died and others were wounded when mortar shells rained down on one of the American camps.

Then came the abduction of Angelo de la Cruz two weeks ago near Fallujah while he was driving a fuel truck from Saudi Arabia. Days later, 10 Filipino truck drivers were smashed home by Iraqi fighters during an attempt to slip back into Saudi Arabia.

Iraqi resistance fighters have threatened to behead De la Cruz if the Philippines does not withdraw its contingent from Iraq. De la Cruz and other Filipinos, who may be captured by the fighters, will soon likely "keep their heads" if the Philippines pulls out its troops from Iraq.

While the withdrawal may antagonize the US and cost the Philippines contracts in Iraq, it will be welcomed by overseas Filipino workers whose remittances help prop up the Philippine economy.

Angelo is an innocent victim

By Savino Bernardi, C.S.
Executive Secretary,
Episcopal Commission
for Pastoral Care of Migrants
and Itinerant People

THE decision of Angelo de la Cruz to hold hostage by certain elements in Iraq has indeed cast country into an international diplomatic emergency case and a national humanitarian concern. The deadline for his execution by beheading has already been extended several times.

All political, diplomatic, religious, social and humanitarian resources have been tapped here and abroad to canvass the case of Angelo and their are hostages of other nations in similar situation) from the political implications the revolutionary elements in Iraq want to favor into the negotiations. The objective reality is clear. Angelo is an innocent victim and a hostage used as a pawn in a political religious and social conflict.

In the Philippines, as usual, this dire situation like has also been given demand for better employment. Angelo simply wanted to help his eight children and with no better formation wanted to break the circle of poverty and become human.

The law of poverty

Being a victim of poverty in the Philippines, he sought work in a foreign country, endowing a life of hardship, and of the shared sacrifices of the several millions abroad, the Filipino may say one day have a brighter future with love lived in dignity and hope.

Angelo's presence in Iraq as a worker is also a consequence of all those subtle aspirations and desires. The direct reasons must not be forgotten: Angelo, in his own little way, contributed to the rebuilding of Iraq from the destruction of the last war - a foreigner concerned as a person for his dear brothers and sisters in the same spirit of love and concern for his own family. Several others thousands of Filipino workers are serving, they are there to help the reconstruction of Iraq after the destruction caused by the recent war.

Not combatants

It's time, too, even the way how representing the Filipino government are there for this purpose. They cannot be construed as combatants. They are not enemies of the Iraqi people, but their friends. Angelo has never made a mistake of external behavior. What most people present is that like Angelo for such a grounder, innocent and generous spirit of service and love? To do so it is to kill what is most sacred and honorable for what is human. Then, without being too romantic, even in a crime these Iraqi elements declares their like, to which people, nations and humanity as

whole, sacred and enduring hatred.

The executioners would become sinners themselves in the sheet of hatred. The God of Angelo and the Allah of his executioners have to uphold sacred teachings of love, brotherhood and compassion. On these teachings stems humanity and the same sub faith. On these teachings alone stand brotherhood and peace for all. The plea of all Filipinos is those who hold Angelo and Governor to still time to Allah is their common prayer. We plead for compassion!

Of course, many are those who would like to see religious joined against politics, church against government. I think it would be the present drama involving a brother of ours, an innocent victim and totally foreign to the prominent issues involved, that religion and church walk close of the quick date of political and personal gains.

Filipinos are fair game to Iraqi rebels

By Carmen Pedit-Ongkiko
Chief, Migrant Institute

WHAT'S behind the fact that President Macapagal-Arroyo is supporting the illegal and immoral US war of aggression and occupation of Iraq.

This move did not pass the scrutiny of Congress and the bar of public opinion. The unabashed support for the war has made overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) open targets for Iraqi rebels and extremists. The result has not only brought us to the Nagetsville InCruz hostage crisis. It has cast a pall of uncertainty over the safety of the lives and livelihood of 1.5 million OFWs in the Middle East.

The three core all points so clear has: findings Iraqi Resistance Movement, Abdul Aziz Hakim Brigades, Mujahedeen Shura Council and Ansar al-Sunnah Army.

The demands are clear: withdrawal of Philippine troops from Iraq and termination of the current relationship between the Philippine government and the US government.

Angelo de la Cruz, the truck driver who was abducted by Iraqi insurgents, is a victim of the US war of aggression and occupation of Iraq. He is a victim of the US government's policy of deployment of Filipino workers in war zones.

Angelo de la Cruz is a victim of the US government's policy of labor export. He is a victim of the Philippine government's policy of labor export

BRITISH OPEN

Winless Skip surges ahead

TROON, Scotland— The ultimate grinder is halfway to one of golf's ultimate prizes.

Skip Kendall, who has not won on the PGA Tour in nine years, ended the 36th hole from off the green Friday on his way to a 5-under 66 and the second-round lead in the British Open.

The unpredictable leaders who led the way to get in his third Open, made the spotlight say a day when Masters champion Phil Mickelson recovered with a 66 to get back in contention and Colin Montgomerie thrilled the hometown fans with a curve of his own.

"It was a glorious day," Kendall said.

Indeed it was, with spectators enjoying light winds and warm temperatures off the Scottish coast and players stripping off some shirts on the warm-blood Troon was getting up.

Kendall bolted a birdie-3 on the third hole for a birdie to open his round, and rolled a putt from off the front of the green on the par-5 16th to grab the lead from Thomas Levet of France.

"I was not paying attention to a lot of things you could get caught up in on days," Kendall said.

Kendall, who came agonizingly close to winning earlier this year when he lost a playoff to Mickelson at the Bob Hope Classic, has won more than $6.3 million on the tour but has never finished his experiences by winning.

He finished two strokes at 7-under 135, a shot ahead of first-round leader Levet and two shots ahead of England's Barry Lane and U. J. Choi of South Korea.

The unassuming 39-year-old Kendall topped a leaderboard full of international players that included seven major championship winners like Ejay Singh and Ernie Els. Tiger Woods was six shots back after shooting an even par 71.

Montgomerie birdied two of his last four holes on the course where he learned his game before shooting a three par-par-par-on the last hole for a 69 that left him three shots back. AP

CHOI makes his drive at No. 16. AP

Birdie binge powers Park

SEBRING, Ohio— Gloria Park had 10 his shot in a 5-under 66 and held a one-stroke lead in the first tournament she shinned didn't play in.

Her race shirt Thursday night, and are usually considered a solid bowling before the first round of the Circle Eagle LPGA Classic Friday at Squaw Creek Country Club.

"I had pretty good now," Park said. "Every day any stomach was heaving and I threw up during the night."

Yong Young A leads 67 and Donna Andrews was another stroke back. Kimiko Lonnaker, Nadina Taylor and Laura Diaz all had 68s.

Defending champion Rachel Teske acing glad all day and finished with a 75.

Park has been bothered by a sore left wrist over the past three months.

"My wrist was still hurting," she said. "I was getting ultrasound on it this morning and actually asked one of the sponsors if they had any shirtless because I really wasn't feeling well."

Park had her personal best by birdies in a round but also struggled at times. She had two bogeys and double-bogeyed the 163-yard, par-3 12th.

"At that point I was really mad," Park said of hitting a 4-iron long off the tee. "I'm like golf is so mental. I can see where the green on a close hole and then was one of them."

The field is anything but stellar. Pat Hurst, who shot a 73, is the only other golfer here in the top 20 on the money list. She is 19th. AP

Tuason eyes bigger kart lead

MIKE Tuason of Tuason Racing-AGSet Mobile hopes to pad his lead on the 2004 Shell Super Karting Series onwide in fourth leg next weekend, July 24-25, in the "Fast Track" of the Southwood Clubhouse in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

The track, located at the park's topography zone, follows specifications by the Fédération Internationale De Automobile (FIA) and the Confederation Internationale de Karting (CIK) for performance and safety.

Tuason currently brought pride and honor to the country after finishing the Rotax Max Masters course of the 2004 Castrol Philippine Shell Asian Karting Open Championship held in Cabanatuan last month.

He hopes to follow it up with another win in the Senior Masters Max class of the rear-wheel series sponsored by Shell, Bridgestone, MSW Instrument, Eastway Motorcycle Racing, Denso Ardrox Denso. He enjoys a total of 142 points.

He's way ahead of two tough rivals, Bernard Yu and reigning Champion Jason Tan, who are currently in second and third with 85 and 81 points, respectively.

The next race, which boasts of a 23-man talented field, is expected to be the most exciting with Asian karting veterans class champions Manuel Theisz (79 points), Brazil's Kenzo Ji-P Gaucho Andrew Radjo and Daniel Chok, and formula BMW driver Tuson by joining the hunt for the crown.

Lance sends foes warning with strong climb

BASSO finishes first with Armstrong's help.

LA MONGIE, France—Lance Armstrong is not generally known for his generosity when it comes to his rivals.

But on Friday's 12th stage of the Tour de France, the American gave away not one but two of his rivals with the other as he made a big step toward securing a record sixth victory in the race.

Armstrong, despite not yet taking the yellow jersey, invited chaos to overtaking Spain's Miguel Indurain as the king of the race with a second-place finish behind Italian Ivan Basso of the CSC team on the last mountain finish to serve a stiff reminder to his main contenders.

Germany's 2003 winner Jan Ullrich, of T-Mobile, struggled in the mountains test and ensuring second-place overall for Tour.

White House spokesperson Scott McClellan said reporters that the president, who left out sharply with France in the run up to the war in Iraq, has been avidly watching the record-breaking race.

Bush, 58, turned to biking with a vengeance after a bad knee-based him to cut back on his favorite exercise, jogging.

The president, who likes to run across the dusty landscape of his Texas ranch on a mountain bike, had not been known to follow the Tour, even though Armstrong goes "into a bike and is a bike leader's legacy in August 2001. AFP

Reyes upsets race favorites

JEF Reyes of Auto Glaze pulled off an impressive win to keep solo leadership in the class B division of the National Touring Car Championships at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Rosario, Batangas.

Reyes, backed by Auto Glaze, Tropical Ice Sparkling Water, Gilette, Auto Alding Inc. and Motorcycle Engine Dynamics, recorded a stunning performance that surprised even top-rated drivers Jerry Contreras of Mako Motors Phil. Inc. Sweder Ong and Dominic Sua.

He now tallies 79 points in Class B, a solo margin over Sua and Mona Sharon who had 60 and 49 points, respectively.

He topped the first race of the Class B-division event Dayo'i and Omar Ayudan and ended runner-up to Sua after the tight showdown in the afternoon race.

He also posted the fastest lap time of 1:49.098 in the qualifying trials to snatch the pole from Contreras (1:50.870) and Sua (1:50.891).

He could have finished second in the National Touring Car Championships but on the final lap, Reyes spun out while trying to overtake Ong over the last corner going to the finish line and settled for a 6th and 4th place finish.

REYES

Bush ties fate to Armstrong's Tour de France bid

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush on Friday turned the stars of the air equipment aboard his Air Force One airplane to a new purpose: Catching every televised moment of the Tour de France.

He also tied his fate to the bike 2 rider to follow Texas Lance Armstrong's bid to win a record-smashing sixth victory saying: "He's going to win, and he's going to win. There's no need to worry about it the race anymore."

Bush's comments came after stretching back a big step toward securing last with a victory, leaving his main rivals to die dust during the country's first real mountainous test and ensuring second-place overall for Tour.

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Haas sprays 20 aces, blasts Agassi off the court

LOS ANGELES—Tommy Haas recovered from a disastrous 1-5 start to score three nine champion Andre Agassi, 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, Friday putting Lleyton Hewitt in line to the semifinals of the $500,000 ATP event.

Haas, who fired over 20 aces—the last to earn a match point—was twice thwarted as he served for the

HAYEK celebrates his win over Rosaldo.

contest in the second set by crowd favorite Agassi. The 34-year-old American had troubles at the net which eventually contributed to his defeat.

Haas, who missed out of 2003 with shoulder surgery and came back to win a title in April, will face off against Frenchman Cyril Saulnier, who defeated third seed Mardy Fish, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (8/5), in their quarterfinal.

The second semi will be contested between unseeded German Nicolas Kiefer, 26, 6-4 winner over Britain's Tim Henman, and Montreal wild card Frederic Montana, who stopped South African Wesley Moodie, 6-3, 6-4.

A disappointed Agassi added the struggle's high standard towards.

Added the three-time Los Angeles champion, who last lost here in 1999: "I give off to a great start hitting well.

"It's played well to get back into the first semifinal of the season to be able to close it out quickly."

The defeat was only the third for Agassi in the series against four wins—the last three over Haas in straight sets. AFP

Art shoots back

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I WROTE about a booming storm in shooting last week, about some shooters going out in arms against Arturo R. Macapagal, president of the Philippine National Shooting Association (PSNA). Behind the mysterious of her.

"Dear Al,

"The morning of June 27 with rifle and pistol shooters vying for the national team was intended to explore the new process of selection approved by the PSNA board. As written in your column, other matters were brought up.

"1. Why is the PSNA not earning funds to help shooters? I do think it is the responsibility of the association to raise funds for individual shooters. People initially make up the sport becomes they like it. If they discover they have the talent and aptitude they then try to develop it and some aspire to have the honor to represent the country. The PSNA has a pool of very qualified coaches available for those shooters. Supporting athletes capable of winning medals in international competitions is the responsibility of the PSC. The shooter however also must act responsibly. If an athlete accepts financial support from the public through the PSC, he or she is expected to deliver. If there is failure, then continuing support should no longer be expected. Some shooters have received more than P1 million each (consisting of allowances, ammunition and foreign trips) in support from the PSC but have failed to win any medal after being given the privilege and honor to compete for the country several times.

"2. How come the PSNA does not have a development program? We do have a continuing development program and many of the current shooters are products of the development program. Because of the successful experience in other countries where the armed forces and the police are active in the shooting sport, through the help of their fine Angelito Reyes, a good of the top marksmen of the armed forces is now undergoing intensive training in international shooting under the supervision of the PSC-supported PSNA coaching staff. We expect that the future national teams will include many from the armed forces. With Secretary Reyes now involved with the PSC we believe that it is a matter of time before the police also gets involved in the program.

"We also have an ongoing program to expand the list of schools with rifle and pistol teams and a half minutes school while for Pilot Hamilton, Arturo Joseph Alcantara, Jr. Ateneo de Manila who helped him win three of his five college jumps, it was also celebration day on the lake.

While screaming around to slow down before finishing a bike-length behind Basso, Hamilton calculated almost three and a half minutes down in 39th place, behind the stage's four-placed Australian.

Frenchmen Thomas Voeckler retained the race leader's yellow jersey but had to work hard to keep it on his shoulders on a day which saw the riders take a soaking as the rain came down before the final 15-km climb to here.

The 24-year-old La Boulangere

INQUIRER Mindanao

Editor Jun Bandigued
Assoc. Ed./Nico A. Alconaba

THE OBJECTIVE of the trek rises above the clouds.

Conquering Mt. Pandadagsaan

By Leonard Paul Pale
Davao City

THERE are those who climb mountains and those who are mountaineers. For the latter, mountaineering is a way of life and it flows through their veins much like the way electricity powers a light bulb.

Mountaineers have literally lured themselves with nature and it's quite difficult to keep them apart, even for a short period of time. To them, the mountains, oceans and sky are not just playgrounds but sanctuaries from life's complications.

For years, mountaineers have constantly been searching for peaks that will really test their skills and spirits, and until now, the hunt rages on.

In New Bataan, Compostela Valley just rested a half hours of travel from Davao City, lies Mt. Pandadagsaan, which means "a gathering" in Manobo. Atop the magnificent mountain is White Peak (6,070 feet above sea level), considered the fourth highest summit in Mindanao.

Just recently, a team from the Mountaineering Federation of the Philippines Inc (MFPI) led by its vice president for Mindanao Rey Imbis-gayan and the Mountaineering Federation of Southern Mindanao (MFSM) represented by its president Danilo "Bunsi" Sucro ventured a reconnaissance ascent to White Peak.

With support from the municipal government, the climbers sought to determine White Peak's potential to host a number of explorers.

Solid rock

"If you look at the mountain from afar, you can see that the tip of the peak is colored white. This is because the area is solid rock," Sumagayang said.

The mountain itself, he pointed out, had a lot of wonderful features, including virgin forest trails leading to the peak and a 700-meter-sunny portion that should not be traversed because of its possible harm on the natural terrain.

Virtually unexplored, it also boasts of a hot-air basin and a wide array of rare flora and fauna. In fact, during the reconnaissance ascent, Sucro caught a rare glimpse of a "semicock."

The many deep ravines and steeps are ideal for rappelling, while some sturdy rock faces are perfect for rock climbing. The crew had to use ropes just to get across from one point to the next because of the very loose floor of rocks and gravel.

It takes eight hours to trek to the first base camp and another six to eight hours to the second camp near the peak.

Tips for climbers

Although a number of water sources could be found, Davao reconnoitered close climbers should bring their own stocks to avoid dehydration.

Temperature can drop as low as 10 degrees Celsius, which is why warm clothing is a must.

But the most important tip for mountaineers is to employ lightweight backpacking techniques as weekend packs resulted to getting tangled with the thick vegetation. Climbers will also have a lot of difficulty negotiating the very narrow and twisting trails.

Sumagayang, a veteran mountaineer and adventure racer, explained that Pandadagsaan was definitely not for rookies or the faint-hearted. It will really push mountaineers to their limits and all of their performances, from experienced to basic climb organization and preparation, will definitely be stressed.

"You would have to think twice before climbing this mountain. Your skills as a mountaineer will really be tested, and you might want to rethink your lifestyle before you pursue (the endeavor), but it's definitely worth the effort," Sumagayang said.

Eco-tourism

According to provincial tourism officer Iche Lantoc, a local mountaineer, especially the locals, had been looking forward to the opening of the mountain since it would really boost eco-tourism prospects for the municipality and the province.

"The mountain will remain open as long as the number of climbers are limited and its preservation and protection are ensured," she said.

TRAVERSE scale Mt. Pandadagsaan.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Gergorio

CHILD-FRIENDLY
A mother uses a fogging machine to drive away mosquitoes at the compound of the Sta. Ana Elementary School in Davao City. The operation was conducted amid reports of a rising number of dengue fever cases in Mindanao, which has drawn concern from health authorities.

Negros town mayor raises alarm over dengue fever

By Carla P Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Mayor Luis Miranda of Pulupandan, Negros Occidental, yesterday raised concerns over the rise of dengue fever cases in his town, saying it has become alarming, with three young children having died of the disease since late June.

This brings to five the number of recent deaths from dengue fever in Negros Occidental. The two other deaths were in Isabela and Bago City.

Manilla said the fatalities were Patrick James Pura, 3, of Barangay Zone 1, who died on July 14; Sandy May Rafols, 8, Barangay Zone 6, who died July 8; and Rean Javier Martinez, 3, of Barangay Zone 1-A, who died on last June, all in the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Regional Hospital (CLMMRH) in Bacolod City.

Zone 6 Barangay Captain Lowell del Rosario said Sky Corporative lost had an upsurge of dengue cases lately that have reached 20.

Information

Manilla said a cleanup and information drive to suppress dengue fever is being conducted in his town to prevent its spread.

Dr. Grace de Jesus, Pulupandan health officer, said their cleanup drive began as early as June, with barangay officials asked to remove residents in destroy breeding places of mosquitoes that are carriers of dengue fever.

She said the rains have presented mosquitoes with breeding places that must be constantly cleaned up.

Deadlier strain

The dengue fever cases appear to have a stronger strain this time, she said, noting that the three Pulupandan children who died suffered from either bleeding in the brain or in the intestines.

Meanwhile, Bago City reported one death from dengue. The victim was identified by City Health Officer Pilar Mallorca as Aiko Sison, a year and 9 months old, of Purok Bulagtang, Poblacion, who died July 7 at the CLMMRH.

Two-year-old Glenice Hilario Cenon of Purok Mudo-Abbot, Barangay Punta-Taytay, Bacolod City, died of dengue on July 11, the Bacolod City Health Office reported.

As of yesterday, Pulupandan had 50 dengue cases and Bago had 46.

A Provincial Health Office report recorded only one death from dengue from January to July this year, compared to two deaths in the same period last year.

US agency execs meet MILF leaders over links to terror

KORONADAL CITY—Ranking officials of a United States agency met with key leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) amid fresh reports about the rebel group's alleged ties with international terror organizations.

MILF peace panel secretariat Ibrahim Montaved said United States Institute of Peace (USIP) executive director Dr. Eugene Martin and Dr. Astrid Tuminez, senior research associate, met with MILF peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal and lawyers Lanang Ali and Michael Mastura, both members of the rebels' negotiating team, in Maguindanao on Thursday.

Dr. Martin and Tuminez were accompanied by US embassy political officer Joseph Mun.

The USIP was created by the US Congress in 1984 "to promote the prevention, management, and peaceful resolution of international conflicts."

Although it is an independent and non-partisan federal institution assigning to its website, "the USIP's board of directors is appointed by the US President and confirmed by the Senate."

Washington has pledged to help in the peace process but has urged the MILF to sweep its ties with the Jemaah Islamiya, the Indonesia-based terror group linked to Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network.

The rebel group has consistently denied any link with the 21-but on July 13, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG), a group headed by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, came up with a report that said "it is clear that JI members have worked out arrangements with individual MILF commanders."

Sidney Jones, ICG South East Asia project director, said they doubt whether MILF leaders involved in the negotiations know anything about this link.

She said cooperation between the two organizations stems depending on the local commanders concerned but it can involve training, logistical support or joint operations.

The persistent reports have been hampering the progress of the negotiations between Manila and the rebels according to Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

But Mastura said the MILF was consistent and none of its leaders work with the JI.

During the three-hour meeting with USIP representatives, Mastura said Iqbal told the USIP representatives that the peace process was moving on, with Malaysia as facilitator.

He said Iqbal made it clear that the clear part of the negotiations should be blamed on the failure of the Philippine government to comply with previous agreements, including the repositioning of troops from the Buliok complex.

The agreement also calls for the panels of member clamps against some rebels who were involved in the two bomb explosions in Davao City last year.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the MILF-JI link is a recycled allegation.

"After all, the ICG had never gone to Mindanao to conduct personal interviews or talk to us about the issue," Kabalu said.

He said that the issue of Mt. Cararao had long been addressed when members of the Bantay Ceasefire Committee and non-government organizations and journalists visited the area in December last year.

The United States' growing concern about the alleged presence of terrorists in parts of Mindanao has prompted it to train Philippine troops.

But aside from training Filipino soldiers against terrorism, Washington also poured in grants and aid, in the hope of spurring development in Mindanao.

The latest of these projects is the construction of a bridge that would connect Sangao to mainland Tawi-tawi.

Capt. Ibhusain Angan, commander of the Philippine Navy Task Force 62 in Western Mindanao, said on Wednesday, US forces went to Tawi-tawi to make a final site inspection for the construction of the 3000-meter bridge.

He said the project likely starts in October.

"This is a very important bridge that area not done. With this bridge, farm products can already be transported any time. They are no longer limited to the tides, weather," Angan said.

Xinai-Mei Y. de Guzman and Jeffrey M. Tupas, Phil Mindanao Bureau

Bataan, Zambales algae bloom causes fish kill

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—An extensive algae bloom has caused a massive fish kill in the waters of Bataan and Zambales, killing several tons of fish and other marine species.

Jonathan Dela Llana, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) ecology senior head, said the fish kill affected Barangay Balanga in Morong, Bataan, and the towns of Subic and San Antonio in Zambales.

Dela Llana said the fish kill was recorded from July 13 to 15, and believed to have been caused by the depletion of oxygen in the seawater due to the commercial abundance of algae.

Algae blooms consume huge amounts of dissolved oxygen when they decompose and kill fish, crabs and other aquatic species in the process, Dela Llana said.

"We have been monitoring fish kills each year along the coastal waters of Bataan and Zambales as these incidents proved to be of natural occurrence," she said.

She said they have already brought water samples in the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources but test results showed that the recent fish kill was caused by "widely distributed" algae on the surface of the seawaters.

"Fish samples were also examined in the Ocean Adventure Marine Park here and results revealed that no toxins had substances were measured and that the fish kill was caused by asphyxia due to absence of oxygen in the waters," Dela Llana said.

She said there were no toxic elements found in the water samples.

The SBMA ecology center is still verifying another fish kill that was reported in Barangay Ilaya also in Subic town.

Dela Llana said other marine species such as crab and oyster were found floating in the coastal water of Subic. *Allan Macatuno and Greg Rebong-ot, Phil Central Luzon Desk*

Cordillera workers get ₱15 Cola hike

BAGUIO CITY—The regional tripartite wage and productivity board (TWPB) has approved a ₱15 increase in the cost of living allowances of workers in the Cordillera, the National Economic and Development Authority announced here.

The Cordillera has registered an inflation rate of 3.3 percent to 4.5 percent in the last three years, said Jean Ngolab, Ilocos Cordillera director and an TWPB member.

But the board has not factored in the impact of the recent spate of oil price increases, Ngolab said, adding that the public would feel the effect of the oil price only in the coming months.

He said the board might meet for a new round of wage deliberations once the oil price adjustments trigger economic changes in the Cordillera.

By adjusting only the Cola, Ngolab said the board hoped to stave a closure in the wage adjustment law that prevented them from further adjusting wage rates.

But government workers have are still calling on the 13th Congress to grant them a ₱5,000 across the board increase.

Ferdinand Cacnio, president of the Social Welfare Employees Association of the Philippines-Cordillera, said the poorest government employees are those who work in hospitals and other municipalities who earn ₱5,000 a month.

"Since 1999, one ₱5,000 demand has fallen on deaf ears despite its inability to increase economic measures that should ease the rising cost of living," he said. *Vincent Cabreza, Desiree Caluza and Jeannelee Gaddao, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Long wait taking toll on Angelo's youngest

By Tonette Orejas
PEN Central Luzon Desk

ANGELES CITY—The long wait for his alcohol-addicted father may have taken its toll on Angelo de la Cruz's youngest son, Jefferson, a boy afflicted with Down syndrome.

The four-year-old boy was rushed to the Angeles University Foundation (AUF) Medical Center here at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday with pneumonia, according to Dr. Grace Ann Sano, the hospital's senior pediatrics resident physician.

Sounds, an orders of hospital officials, banned reporters from taking photographs or interviewing the boy.

He is in an isolation area and can be allowed to go home next week, Sano said.

De la Cruz's eldest daughter, Aida Carreon, was fed by phone in an undisclosed villa somewhere in Clark, said her brother's condition had improved.

It was Carreon who took the boy to the hospital.

Waving from window

AUF records showed Jefferson was admitted as a "service patient," meaning he was in the charity ward. He bills are being shouldered by Emmanuel Angeles, Clark Development Corp. president, whose family party years the hospital.

Jefferson and his seven siblings have remained in a tightly secured villa in Clark after they were ferried from their house in Barangay Buenavista in Mexico years on Friday by Diamanga Gov. Mark Lapid on the request of De la Cruz's wife, Susana.

The hyperactive last year Jefferson on the balcony from the window of a room in the first house where they were taken to, Jefferson and his brother Jacob, 7, waved to reporters.

For an unknown reason then, no ambulance came three times in the villa, besieging doctors and nurses.

On July 9, when his relatives and neighbors in Pamatawan began the prayer-vigil for their father, Jefferson, Jacob and another brother Antonio, 11, were overheard together.

Much of the time, they stood new to a blackboard where Antonio scribbled: "Kidnapper, pinoy kay Angelo de la Cruz."

Amid the thickening crowd in the village, Jefferson walked excited, clamoring of reporters, photographers and cameramen.

Although seemingly oblivious at first to his father's predicament in the hands of his long captors, Jefferson had started to ask for his "Tatang/Father"; his relatives said.

'Pray more'

During crying fits, he would fall into the tight embrace of Antonio, his 10-year-old sister.

A child psychologist from the regional Department of Social Welfare and Development has been making with De la Cruz's youngest children since 10 May.

In Pilar hometown of Mexico a Catholic priest urged more prayers, especially by children, for De la Cruz.

"Pray more, ask the children to implore God's help for the full safety of Angelo," Fr. Arnel Pantoja said in a homily on 9 June in Mass in Buenavista, where the De la Cruz live.

Florida, who has been saying Mass in the village since the hostage crisis began, said there may no one to talk to only to let the safety of De la Cruz, except God.

Full pullout before State of the Nation Address on July 26

From page A1

lid on the developments in the negotiations for the release of De la Cruz, either dodging reporters' questions or limiting themselves to brief statements, without giving any details on whether or not negotiations were moving at all.

The first unit of Philippine troops withdrawn from Iraq have arrived in Kuwait and began preparing to leave for Manila, bound to a commercial flight.

The remaining troops would leave Iraq soon, he said, adding: "I can definitely say today they are still making preparations."

Mangudadatu said the troops "feel proud that they are going to leave Iraq with a sense of accomplishment."

Soldier's e-mail

The ambassador, who also stopped a question about US media coverage of Manila for hooting to the kidnappers, pointed out to reporters that a soldier had sent an e-mail from a soldier writing about how proud he was to have served in Iraq.

"The people of Bohol, Kabalo, Tagbilaran, Philippine Ambassador Rayzan Mangudadatu told Reuters. "Now they are calling to go back home. We're trying to get all the booking done."

The 51 included the head of the 11-member humanitarian contingent Brig. Gen. Jorito Pasquera.

Mangudadatu said the 51 members were preparing to leave for Manila aboard

Manila's landmarks get facelift

By Tarra V. Quismundo

PLANS for the restoration of the 72-year-old Metropolitan Theater are now on the drawing board, with the Manila city government, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Government Service and Insurance System as partners in the effort. About P200 million would be earmarked for the project. PHOTO BY ERWIN MASCARIÑAS

INTERIOR shot of the Met, with a seating capacity for 1,840 persons, as designed by modernist architect Juan Arellano. PHOTO BY

Navotas dump 'legal'

By Vick Castroverde

STANDARD

The new Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea Gozun's reaction to the status of the controlled garbage facility now a mess in Navotas, amid mounting complaints from local fishermen and the neighboring town of Obando, Bulacan, that the dump was both an ecological and health hazard.

But Gozun conceded that the dump of both surrounding communities such is nasty smell. She said she would send a "technical group" to look into the problem next week.

"It has been legally established as a controlled dump," she told the reporter when reached on the phone from Buenavista City yesterday. The permit to operate was given by her predecessor, Heherson Alvarez, in Malolos Bulacan Toby Tiangco in October 2004.

Gozun gave no indication she would heed calls for the dump's closure. She added then how have monitoring the waste quality to save the dump, "and there was no problem."

But the town were made last year by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, she said later.

Gozun's position clashed with that of an environmentalist group, saying that what the dump's permit was illegally issued, that it had drained the local environment, and that it is not a "controlled" facility since it gets unsegregated garbage.

Bong Arellano, Ecowaste Movement's Save Plaza spokesman who earlier a dump—located in a flood prone area and a former fish pond—was allowed to operate in violation of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

"Section 27 says existing open dumps after Jan. 25, 2001 must be upgraded into sanitary controlled facilities, and that they are to be closed by Jan. 25, 2006," he told the business paper.

Alvarez issued to Tiangco when he was to be vested some authority over the 84-9001 trash effect, Pagsanjan Mayor Nelly Favis-Villafuerte reported "recommended" that the dump's operation be closed because of findings it had "legislated enough."

PNP raids yield suspected drug ...

From page A20

Several packs of a white substance suspected to be shabu were also found, but Molina declined to say whether they were the seized illegal drug until confirmed by experts.

The PDEA anti-drug chief expressed belief that the warehouse functioned as a storage area rather than as an actual shabu laboratory.

No one was arrested during the operation, but the owner of the place has been identified as a certain Eugene Tan.

Suspicious materials

Molina said the police raided the warehouse after his agents, who broke up a corporation, called him up to inform him of the suspicious products being stored there by the chemists.

"They were probably afraid of being suspected of involvement in an illegal operation," he said.

But he also requested that the name of the corporation and its members be withheld to prevent them from retaliation from drug syndicates.

In Bulacan's City Hall, smoke emanating from a building led to the discovery Thursday night of several sacks of chemicals suspected to be used in the manufacture of shabu.

Roger Ang, 52, of Hillcrest, Villa Liwayway Mayuta, Mercurio, was identified as the owner of the warehouse which he reportedly leased to a certain James Go Bon.

Investigators revealed that Sabutan's firefighters had received a call from a resident saying that there was a fire going on in the area.

However, when firefighters got to the place, they found out that the smoke was coming from two of the 147 drums containing 60 liters) chemicals, including thinner chloride and acetone, stashed inside the warehouse.

Burning chemicals

Crime laboratory experts said the smoke was due to the thermal reaction when the drums and the chemicals it contained became one but when heavy rain fell and drops with penetrated the building.

Aside from the chemicals, firefighters also discovered equipment such as a steam machinery presumed to be used in the manufacture of illegal drugs, prompting them to call the police.

Armed with a search warrant issued by Judge Priscy Quiza, the police raided the warehouse at about 7 p.m. However, the alleged owner of the chemicals and equipment managed to escape.

Although Chief Supt. Marcelo Pinero, Southern Police District director, claimed that some of the substances were being used in the manufacture of shabu, he said this could only be confirmed by crime laboratory experts and members of the Senate Police Crime Operation.

Tourist police to get 'wheels'

By Lala B. Sabuerio

LOOMEN ranked to protect tourists in Manila will soon be blazing the streets on mountain bikes.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) has committed to donating bicycles to members of the Tourist Oriented Policemen or TOP Chief Insp. Gerry Agustin, spokesperson of the Western Police District, disclosed recently.

Later, Cecille Villareal of the DOT public information office confirmed that the department had plans of donating bicycles, but details of when and how many of them will be given to the police were not immediately available.

Around 1,000 members of the rural disturbance unit of the National Capital Region Police Office have been reorganized and designated tourist policemen to a joint project of the police command in Metro Manila and the tourism department.

In an abrupt shift in functions, policemen trained in crowd control and dealing with violent rallies and demonstrations are now taking on more modest role of accommodating foreign and local tourists visiting the country.

The reassignment of the crowd control police comes at a time when rallies are expected to wane because of the perceived stability brought about by the recent elections.

Agustin said the plan to give Metro bicycles would be good for the tourist policemen for a number of reasons.

The bicycles will afford tourist policemen more mobility, especially since by using bicycles, they can evade the traffic gridlock on Manila's streets.

Vehicle is flexible. It can run on any kind of road, and even on sidewalks," said Agustin.

He also said that bicycles were cheaper to maintain and typically, or to the environment because they do not emit fumes. Bring bicycles is also good for the rider's health.

"When using bikes, we can save on gas and the policemen can get exercise at the same time," he added.

The tourist policemen's uniform is maroon around 200, said Agustin. The cop, which is the country's capital, is also home to such tourist destinations as the Rizal Park, but tourists said the recently-opened up hotwalk that also offers a close view of the famed Manila Bay sunset.

But Ronnie and Elaine agree are also popular sightseers, aside to one of their real instincts.

Corinne needs blood donors for mom

TWELVE-year-old Corinne Hizon dreams to be too young to become a parent, but for the moon time she needs to become one for her mother.

Her mother, Rodora, who was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia last month, is confined at the Intensive Care Unit of the Asian Hospital.

AML, a cancer affecting the bone marrow and lymph nodes, diverts the production of the immune system's capacity to fight infection. The patient can die from bleeding, infection and organ failure within months if not treated immediately.

The prime bleeding, which Rodora now suffering, is pain of the cerebrospinal fluid, Dr. Francisco Lopez, Rodora's attending physician said.

Corinne is standing for possible blood donors to save her mother's life. Rodora is a Type AB+, a rare blood type.

"She needs as many blood donors as possible," Dr. Lopez added. A full course treatment costs from P1 million to P1.5 million.

Rodora also has a very low blood pressure and is now aided by a breathing apparatus, Corinne's uncle Boy said.

Blood donors may contact the Asian Hospital and Medical Center at 771-9233.

Financial contributions may be sent to Rodora Mercado's account at the Bank of the Philippine Islands, Taft Avenue-Int. Monte Branch, with account number 0430-2320-71.

Interested donors may also contact Boy Mercado through e-mail address: [redacted]

Rodora also has a very low

Fire eats up pizza parlor

By Lodge del Puerto

A GRABBY'S Pizza parlor went up in flames at dawn yesterday in Ilang City. The one-hour fire destroyed an estimated P1 million in property, according to Fire authorities.

No one was hurt in the incident.

The fire, which reached the 5th alarm, broke out at 5:34 a.m., according to Fire Investigator 1st Sgt. Salvador Santiago.

It quickly engulfed the second floor of Che Shoker's building before spreading to the two-story house of Lennie's Aguilar at the back.

The house was made up of light materials.

The Aguilars owned the Shoker's building.

The last dies guttled the 2nd floor of the adjacent MDH building, Shoker's said.

Firefighters put it out an hour later.

The fire might have started by a bundle of wires near the circuit breaker, investigators said.

Shoker's and Shabey's employees had conducted a general cleaning inside the building an hour before the fire.

AHHH, SUNDAY
A man spends the weekend taking it easy along the seawall of Roxas Boulevard.

NEWLY FOUND REMAINS NOW 7

IDs identify bodies of 2 men, woman at SuperFerry site

By Leila B. Salaverria

IDENTIFICATION cards were key in identifying the remains of three SuperFerry 14 fire victims recovered from the ill-fated ship yesterday morning.

Three of the recovered remains, two males and a female, had ID cards with them.

The name on the first was ID found on one of the male victims was "Antero Langaben." The name on the ADMISSION ID found on the male was "Florante B. Cabalang."

Meanwhile, the ID found on the female victim bore the name Janet Dendina.

Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo, of the Coast Guard's National Capital Region office, said the three were among the four female and three male passengers recovered yesterday.

Clothing, jewelry

The other bodies could possibly be identified through their clothing, jewelry and other accessories they were wearing, said Lt. Armand Balilo, Coast Guard spokesperson.

The seven were among the bodies or bones the ship caught fire on Feb. 27 and burned off El Fraile Island near the mouth of the Manila Bay while enroute from Manila to Iloilo and Cagayan de Oro City.

The 10,000-ton interisland vessel, which was owned by Sulpicio Lines, was also reported and ordered to be sold at public auction by Metro Manila Development Authority.

Apart from the bodies, Tamayo said his men also retrieved several small body parts, including a skull.

The bodies were recovered from the A-deck of the ship, and not in the C-deck as the Coast Guard earlier said in a report. The search and retrieval team underneath the names of the decks, said Tamayo, explaining the mix-up.

Initially, on Friday afternoon, operatives spotted four bodies in the lavatory at the A-deck but were unable to get near the site because of the foul odor coming from the area.

Three more

Yesterday morning, Coast Guard men with the proper equipment went back to the ship and found three more bodies.

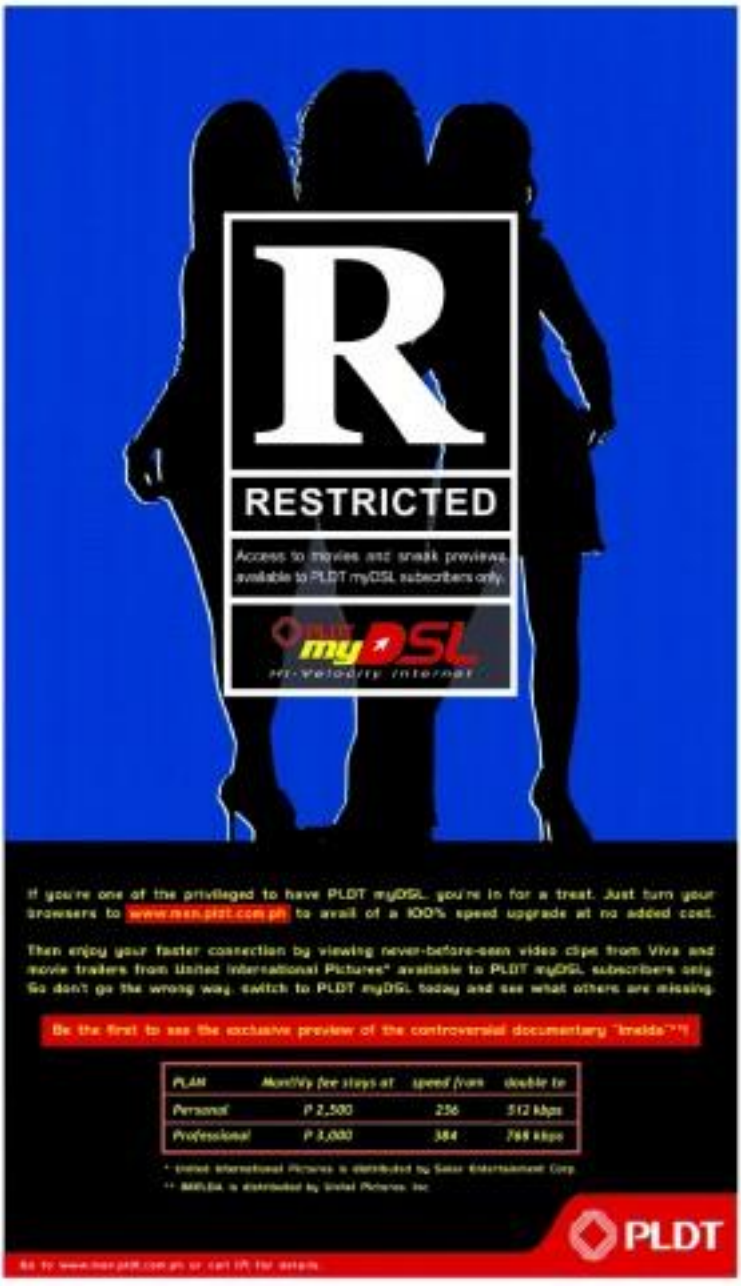
The bodies would be turned over to a funeral parlor accredited by the National Bureau of Investigation.

A total of 731 passengers were reported missing after the ship caught fire. The last reported recoveries from the ship were 18 bodies, 49 skeletons and 57 body parts, which had all been turned over to the NBI.

Tamayo said the four-year ownership that salvage operations could still look for more bodies aboard the ship, it would only be a limited search.

"We'd have to wait for the cargo and debris to be extended from the ship once it is brought to the shipyard before we can conduct a more thorough search of the ship," he said. "The debris makes it difficult and dangerous for operatives to move around and look for bodies."

The SuperFerry 14 is expected to be towed to the Subic Shipyard in Subic by Thursday or Friday next week.



PNP raids yield suspected drug ingredients

By Leila B. Salaverria and Tina G. Santos

POLICEMEN raided a warehouse in Manila and a building in Valenzuela City yesterday in separate operations against illegal drugs laboratories and storehouses.

Members of the Western Police District's anti-illegal drugs division raided a warehouse on Abad Santos Street in Tondo around noon, said Supt. Marcelino Pedroso, division head.

Pedroso said chemicals stored in several sacks and plastic containers were found inside the warehouse, along with weighing scales, stoves, stainless steel containers and other equipment believed to be used in the manufacture of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride).

He identified some of the chemicals found in the warehouse as sodium acetate, sodium hydroxide, chloroform and acetanic acid. He could not give the exact amount of chemicals because the search still have to be determined by a chemist.

Sunday BIZ

E-mail: [illegible]

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

CLASSIFIEDS

Pages B11 to B15

Inspiring tales of eight microentrepreneurs

By Amy R. Remo

JULIE Villanueva and her husband

PEBBIE Cano

DYNA Mendoza

LETICIA Reyes

CANDIDO Delgado

ORLANDO Delay

IF USED politicians would use their billions of pesos worth of pork barrel to finance small businesses, the Philippines' economic growth could be hastened.

And stories of small businesses doing well are always worth reading and hearing about—how useless substances and kinder of businesses.

But the fact is, a lot of businesses in the country never take off the ground because of one thing—lack of capital.

"The solution to a poverty problem would require, among other things, providing the poor people genuine access to credit and capital," said Rodolfo Severo ng Philippine Economist Rafael Buenaventura during the awarding of the 2nd Citigroup search for Microentrepreneurs of the Year.

Eight outstanding microentrepreneurs were honored during the event.

Buenaventura said by encouraging the growth of micro-businesses in the grass roots level, "we are promoting the development of local economies that are the foundation of sustainable and equitable growth in our country."

Citibank provides funds for the training of micro-finance institutions (MFIs) and loans from the Citigroup Foundation.

There were two categories for the year's awards—Hlumkay award given to outstanding microentrepreneurs who had successfully started and sustained a business, and the Mumpreneur award given to exceptional micro-entrepreneurs, who have grown their businesses to a level that is generating employment for people other than immediate family members.

All awardees met the criteria, which include 100 percent repayment rate, sustainable wealth in terms of employment generation, sales turnover, growth in enterprise profits and rate of reinvestment of profits.

Business needs of awardees for the award should also be no greater than P500,000 for the Hlumkay category and P1,000,000 for the Mumpreneur category.

Hlumkay awardees

Latest quality native candies

Candido Delgado

Lawis, Gubatan, Bohol

Mayroon winner

He sought to escape his family problems by dropping out of high school and running away from home.

The only job he could get then was as a delivery boy, where he earned P1 per pack of candy delivered.

Determined to rise out of poverty, he went into candy manufacturing, starting with one "steamy" cook, three helpers and money he borrowed from friends.

Delgado says he chose the candy business because candies are something everyone can eat and have a longer shelf life than most food.

He soon found out about Taytay sa Kinabuhi Inc., where he was able to get a loan and expand his business.

Five years into the business, Delgado now manufactures and sells candies and fruit through 16 outlets in 12 towns in Bohol. He employs 7 regulars and 15 packers and generates monthly sales of more than P200,000.

Mat making

Dyna Mendoza

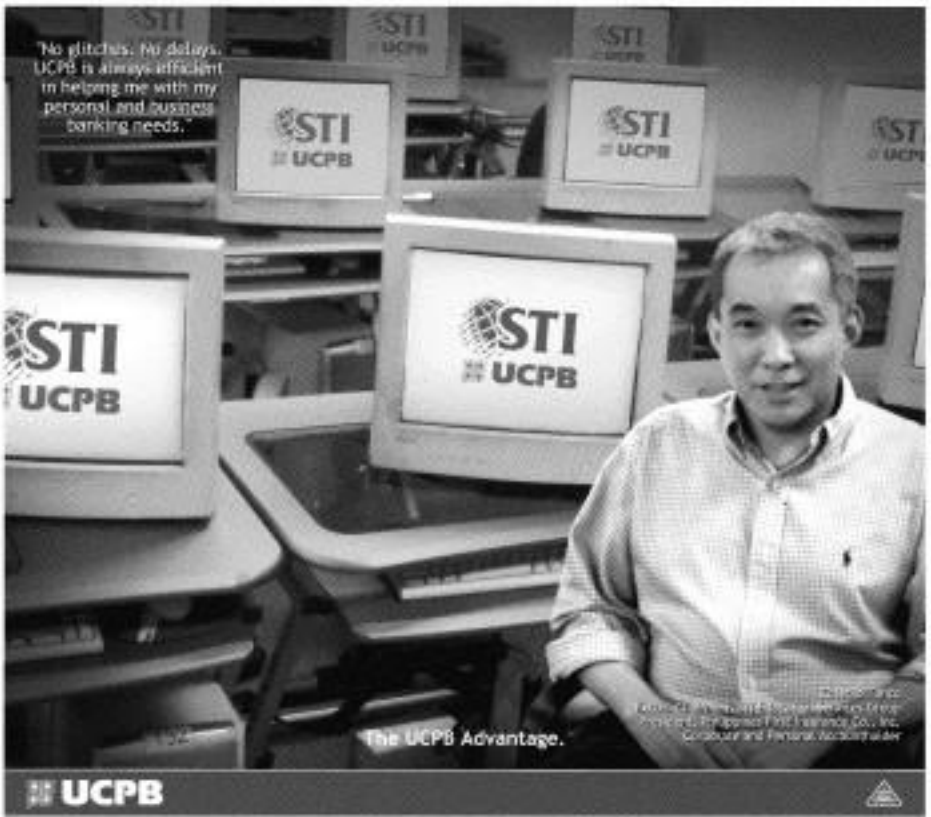
San Carlos, Pangasinan

Loan winner

Mendoza failed in her first attempt to start making in 1994.

When she realized her family deserved to, Pangasinan, Mendoza tried her luck on mat making once more.

Armed with diligence, determination and an P80,000 loan from TSPI Development Corp., Mendoza's business flourished in the [illegible]



BUTTERFLY Museum and Bearland Butterfly House has over 100 species of local butterflies.

ITAKLAND Theme Park is an amusement center that offers children's rides, video games, educational exhibits and shows.

At SIPSIPANCE as its name, Kiner Lang coffee shop sells sandwiches, coffee and your choice of pastry for only P75.

There's more to a mall than its look and location

By Margie Quiroga-Espino

THE LOCATION of its malls may not be the best in the metropolis but the owners of the Star Mall Group of Companies are trying to impact the classic message, "Do not judge a book by its cover" and that people should take a look inside their shopping centers and be surprised at what they will find.

Nevertheless, the group is trying to help the consumers open the book by doing something about its covers.

Owned by the family of Sen. Manuel Villar and wife, Sen. Cynthia Aguilar, the Star Group owns four malls—Metropolis Star in Alabang, Star Mall in Las Piñas and Edsa, and the Hypermart Building Center in Las Piñas. It recently underwent some facelifting by repainting and highlighting more known brands as its anchor shops.

In explaining head Rosalie C. Operana recently met with the business to throw the unique contours of the malls.

Its biggest, the Metropolis Star, is along the South Luzon Expressway in Alabang. The facade of the Metropolis is not very enticing what with the first parking level a public transport terminal but there are surprising finds inside.

With 160,000 square meters of space, the mall contains a theme park, three swimming pools, an indoor resort, an exhibit site, a butterfly house, a museum and soon a business center –the Business@Metropolis.

"It's the convergence of business inside a mall," describes Operana of its center. It will house various service and business centers to cater to professional and personal needs. Medical clinics, therapeutic and vanity salons, law offices, sales headquarters, travel agencies and other business offices.

The Business Center will have fax machines, photocopiers, scanners, cityscapes, computers.

Closer to the heart of the mass markets in the area is its bargain center. There are over 300 kiosks of Carmelalik and Goldcrest stores selling factory-over-runs and imported bangkok, Taiwan and Hong Kong RTW.

The Metropolis one also has cinemas, bakeries-in-courts and a bowling lane that is open until 3 a.m.

The Starmall Las Piñas is the oldest of the Villar-owned malls. Built in 1982, it was known for two decades as Mikie Las Piñas. It

ETS catching and colorful mosaic display adorn the Metropolis Star Atrium

ITAKLAND is the only thermopark inside a mall with three swimming pools

recently changed its facade with known restaurants located at the front like Chowking, Bonchon Chicken and Grill, Kitanoi Japanese Restaurant and Pigeon Coffee Shop.

One of the discovery places in Star Mall and the Metropolis Builders Center is the Kiner Lang Coffee shop where a cup of coffee and pastry can be had for P15 does the name.

One of Edsa Mall's main attraction is its parking which only charges P50 the whole day. Operana says some clients who have appointments along Edsa leave their cars first at the mall, take the MRT to meet their appointments and go back.

Operana adds that we see many are more than Las Piñas mall has a Hunter's Super market.

METROPOLIS Star converted two cinemas to centrale de habitation courts with stadium-style seats for competitions

METROPOLIS holds masses every Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

Inspiring tales of eight microentrepreneurs

ELPHA GAYAM

SHERLITO Reyes

Maxtid awardees

Lenita's Handicrafts
Lolita Reyes
Tayug, Abra
Regional winner

Nobody in Rosal barangay seemed to praise the weaving and handicrafts business.

But after attending a livelihood seminar, she decided to join a local cooperative of weavers, seeing the business can be a good source of income.

When Rosal business picked up, she broke away from the cooperative and set up her own business.

She brought samples of placemats, slippers, baskets, handbags, hats and dresses to Landmark and Rustan's, which eventually placed orders.

Rosal handicrafts business was growing and her loans from CARD Bank enabled her to purchase more materials and employ more weavers in the village.

Four years into the business, Lenita's Handicrafts employs 96 full-time weavers, most of whom are from the village. Rosal current buyers include shopping Pembroke, Rabbitcraze, SBLF and an exporter for Calvin Klein. Rosal says her weekly sales amount to about P60,000.

Bulo-prince
Orlando Bulay
Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya
Junior winner

Dulay's polo handicap was a blessing in disguise.

After a series of unlucky job losses in Manila, Dulay moved back to Nueva Vizcaya with his wife to start a small business.

On the recommendation of Bagabag, Dulay sold hats and bolo knife in a small makeshift stall. But it wasn't enough, he sought to do more.

He attended a DTI-sponsored seminar on how to make bolo pins and sold them with his bolo knife. In that time, they were selling 25 pins today.

In 1998, Dulay got the push he needed for his business when the City Hall ordered 25 pieces. With the loan he got from First Isabela Cooperative Bank, he was able to expand his business.

Seven years into the business, Dulay now employs around 1,500 pins a day, which costs P35 each. He directly employs 27 people, who are given full benefits such as the SSS and Philhealth. He also now has a big kitchen and a snack house.

Poultry man
Sherlito Reyes
Misamis, Bohol
Visayas winner

At a run of a fish vendor, Reyes knew what it was like to live frugally.

From 2 he finished Mechanical Engineering, he did not take the exam. Instead, he moved his family to Manila and went into business after a short-lived experience at a canal repair in Cebu Delpy.

Reyes raised ducks and worked a vegetable garden. He also went into egg and poultry business, seeing that there was no local supplier of eggs in Misamis.

Despite some selling problems and a typhoon that hit last P250,000 worth of ducks and eggs, he recovered.

With a loan from Bayan ng Kauswagan Inc., he was able to diversify his business, aside from duck-raising, he now has a piggery farm, semi-mall in the public market, store that sells poultry supplies and sub-distributorship for a pharmaceutical company.

Reyes has also organized the market-vendors association in his hometown.

Condiments
Elma Gayam
Sto. Tomas, Batangas/Luzon
All-Luzon winner

After several years of working for the mining area in Mt. Diwalwal, Elma and her husband decided to settle down in Sto. Tomas, where they peddled fish and petcoke.

But what they earn was not enough to make ends meet and provide for a family of seven.

Elma packed condiments like black pepper and garlic and peddled them to the mining area.

The business clicked, so to speak, since small sachets are suited for use by the poor in the province.

The loan she obtained from Rural Bank of Sto. Tomas helped her business flourish. She was able to buy two-three tilf trucks, which were later converted to passenger jeepneys.

Five years into the business, Elma says she now earns roughly P25,000 a month and is able to keep her four children in school with what the earnings of the business. She also employs neighboring housewives.

Microfinance is the provision of small collateralized loans, worth P1 million and below, to the poor to help them start their own business.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Shooting beyond the bounds

Celebrity photographer Jun de Leon's star project for Pepsi celebrates daring and limitless possibility

Text by Alex T. Vergara
Photos by Jun de Leon

DON'T be surprised if your video-ready cell phone starts getting a 10-second teaser starting this week. The preview is a glimpse of a six-minute short film titled "Waves of Echo," starring actor Jericho Rosales and directed by celebrity photographer Jun de Leon.

Produced by Pepsi and shot mostly in Batanes by award-winning cinematographer Mickey Hurtado, the film is due to hit your mobile phone screens this October. It features the heartthrob supposedly in the buff as he engages in one of his favorite activities outside of show biz: surfing.

Not even perhaps an avid fan of that other cola drink will miss Pepsi's newest batch of celebrity endorsers shot by De Leon. Aside from Rosales' billboards, giant images of Operation Blue Blanco, model Amanda Griffin and actress-socialite Cristine Lopez are now splashed on various parts of the archipelago.

The campaign was inspired by Pepsi's global tribute "Live for More," which features such footage acts as Britney Spears, Beyoncé, Jerry Yan and David Beckham. MORE, Pepsi's ad agency in the Philippines, gave it a less "multinational" Filipino spin with "Kaya mo 'Yan."

MORE based its strategy on the expressed ideas of a cross-section of Filipino respondents ages 14-25. "Most young people aspire to do more and young Filipinos are no exception," says David Guerrero, chief executive officer of MORE. "Kaya mo 'Yan' achievements set him the contest-it's group."

More traditional spots

MORE, together with some of the country's leading stylists and makeup artists, collaborated with De Leon on this latest marketing campaign. This time, however, the talent's involvement went beyond the camera, he was hired by Pepsi as one of its creative consultants.

As part of its commitment to its talents, Pepsi will feature them in a series of non-traditional spots to promote not so much the product as their respective "passions." Other than Rosales' short film, De Leon's hour-to-thirty-minute feature plans for the other three.

Directing isn't new to De Leon. He had done a flurry of self-art episodes of Carlos Bayo's *Bubble Gang* show in the 1980s. Such projects, however, have taken a backseat in favor of commercial and fashion photography. Not to, mind Pepsi's offer came along.

"That's one thing I relish about this project," says De Leon. "I can throw in as many ideas as I can. What they do is make them happen."

The experience is perhaps a cross between commercial and fashion photography on a bigger, more diverse scale. Like all advertising efforts, utmost concentration to subject is required. At the same time, however, De Leon has been given more elbow room to pursue his ideas.

"I can't say one is easier than the other," he says of advertising vis-à-vis editorial shoots. "But if you're passionate about one thing, like I am about images, then everything becomes easy."

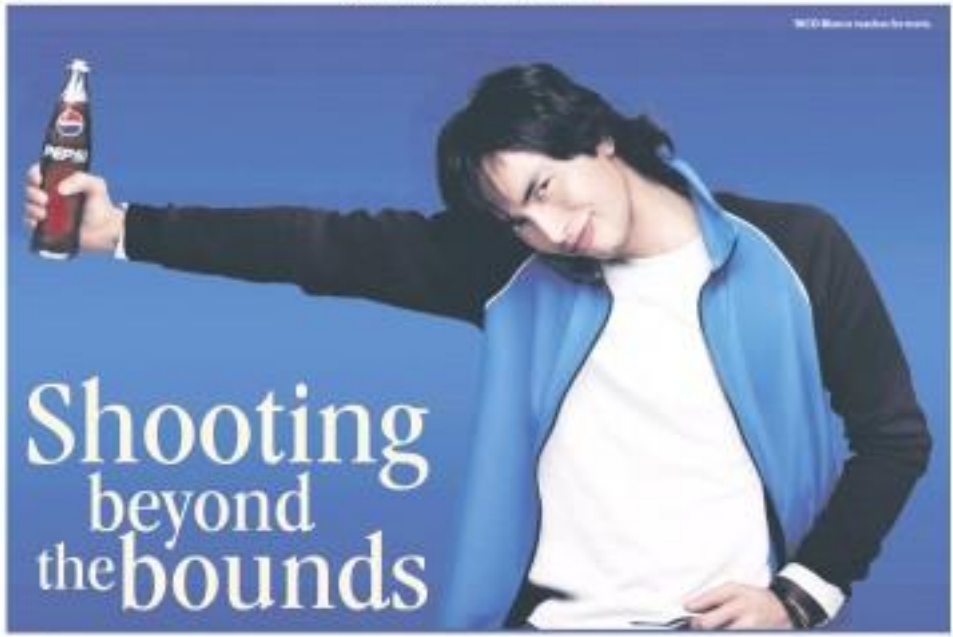
The campaign is simply too big for one person to do. Thus, De Leon emphasizes the collaborative work that has gone into the shooting of the celebrities, and that still goes on as they take the campaign to the next level.

Brand essence

Each celebrity was shot individually for one whole day at De Leon's studio in Pasadena. The results are very much a product of the respective stylists and makeup artists who worked on them. Noel Manzanal and Jing Mateo for Rosales; Miller Arenga and Jing Mateo for Blanco; Luis Angeles and Juan Sarte for Griffin; and Jessie Epperson and Greg Zaldarra for Lopez.

"These celebrities embody Pepsi's 'Hats for Blues' philosophy," says Guerrero. "They've achieved and done things beyond what was expected of them. Beyond looks and popularity, these people exude the essence of the brand."

Aside from his dramatic pictures, De Leon is also known both in advertising and journalism circles for his keener instincts. He gives a subject a demeaning demand for a role presence for an unexpected interpretation. Thankfully, no such thing happened during the Pepsi moments.



Shooting beyond the bounds

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"Everything went smoothly," he says. "It boils down to relationships. Once you've wanned the subject's name, he or she won't think twice about doing anything for you."

De Leon cites the case of Blanco, who sprained his right leg in a basketball game the day before his shoot. Instead of begging off, he went as scheduled, even jumping before the cameras as if he weren't in pain.

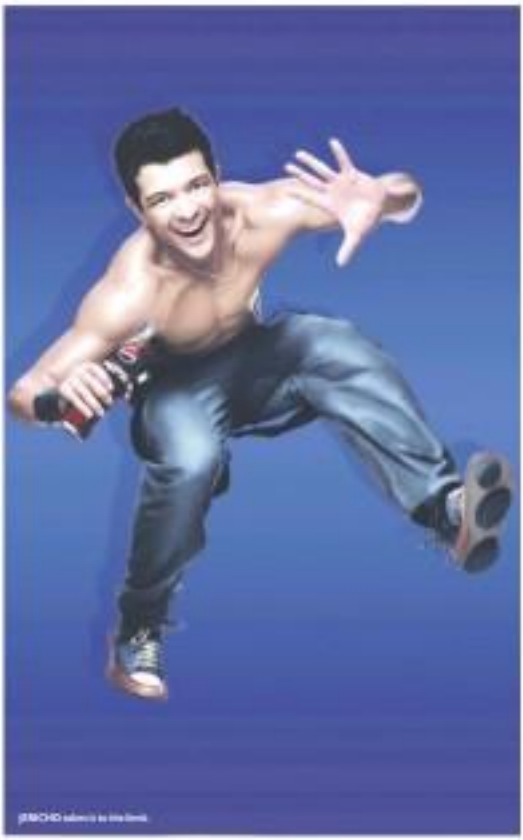
"I was the one who wanted to postpone it," says De Leon. "But Boss insisted on doing it anyway. Sir had to spray his leg with pain reliever to keep it numb during the shoot."

It's probably no empty boast when De Leon says that, so far, he and his collaborators, which includes Carina Sicad-ero, Bobbi Aguilar, Lee de Leon, Louie Bautista and Rahat Tarrum, are merely washing the surface. They flew back to Siargao last week with Rosales to shoot final scenes.

"I don't like to say limits," says De Leon. "Since everything I've requested for has been given to me by Pepsi, I can't ask for more."

Obviously, this leaves him and his partners at MRM plenty of room to claim for more.

E-mail the author at sweetgarcia@inquirer.com.ph



JERICHO salutes in his first film.

AMANDA Griffin stares in love.

GLOBE gets crazy.

Jericho Rosales takes the lead as he stars in a short film its creators say is destined to make waves

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

Sandugo shows Bohol's vibrant colors

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By Angelica J. Sanchez
Correspondent

THE REPEATED Sandugo festivities began, but the final is yet to come—the much-awaited Sandugo movement soothe street-dancing competition.

More than a festivity of music, dances, arts and culture, the Sandugo is a celebration of life of the Boholanos.

The Sandugo, or blood compact, is Bohol's participation in the Department of Tourism's Fiesta Islands program, which promotes the country as a premier tourist destination.

The Sandugo is especially significant in the country's history and culture as it is the very first international treaty of friendship, cooperation and amity between the Visayan and white races, represented by native chieftain Rajah Sikatuna and Spanish conquistador Gov. Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, on March 16, 1565.

Recently, 10 pretty lasses representing the different towns of Bohol took part in the Miss Bohol Sandugo.

On the 25th, the streets of Tagbilaran City will be the place to go for the traditional Sandugo street dancing, winding up at the Provincial Cultural Tourism Complex for the blood compact reenactment and the ritual performances.

The month-long celebration kicked off on July 1, when Tagbilaran City celebrated its charter day.

Like in the past 14 years, this year's celebration features the traditional trade fair overseen by the Tagbilaran City government. This year, however, instead of holding it along CPG avenue, the trade fair has found a new site at the Tagbilaran City Tourism Port, the first ever in the country, in order to decongest the fast-becoming city's promenade with its new set of bright lights like those which are found only along the bay walk of Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

Bohol's successes

The Sandugo is also a celebration of the successes of the Boholano people.

The three-day Entrepreneurs Fair handled by the provincial government, through the Bohol Investment and Promotions Center Bohol Technical and Livelihood Development Center, drew a big crowd of Boholanos seeking a better life, not abroad but right at home, as the country's locale business giants throughout the archipelago.

The three-day fair also featured the launching of the Boholano Entrepreneur Award 2004 and the BIPC Bohol Technological and Livelihood Development Center website and the re-launching of the Bohol Products Display Center.

Patrons will get to taste the best of the Boholano products that will also be featured in the sign-fair sponsored by the provincial government and food fair spearheaded by the Bohol Association of Hotel, Resorts and Restaurants.

As it is also a celebration of life, the Sandugo festivities also featured a super duo successful four-day Civic Action in four towns of the province. The activity resulted in an unexpected turnout of almost 9,000 patients who took advantage of the free medical consultations, dental services, optometric fair, dispensing of medicines and multivitamins, supplemental feeding and distribution of goodies to pre-identified indigent families in the towns of Lobor, Sikatuna, Sevilla and Corella.

A team of doctors from Metro Manila and various parts of the country is performing operations over the weekend for patients suffering from cataracts.

Boholanos suffering from facial deformities and burns will get a new lease on life through the Operation Smile and sucessive-five surgeries at the Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital on July 20-22.

The medical missions are sponsored by the Operation Smile Philippines, Operation Smile International, Hildegarians WI, Home Beach Foundation, Cataract Foundation of the Philippines, Rikal Mo-ke-hee Foundation and the provincial and Tagbilaran City governments.

July 23, meanwhile, has been marked off for the blood-letting activity of the Philippine National Red Cross and the committed collaboration of the municipality of Balilihan, where Sen. Manuel Villar will be the guest of honor.

July 23 is a red-letter day for Boholanos celebrance its 350th founding anniversary as a province.

Sandugo shows Bohol's vibrant colors

The month-long festivity commemorates the blood compact and celebrates the Boholano's lust for life

From page C1

The celebration will highlight the pricing out of the first set of Bajale Sikatuna dancers to the different dress countries, commending Boholanos and employees of the provincial government who have made an impact on the development of Bohol.

The Center for Culture and Arts Development of the provincial government has likewise prepared a month-long series of activities which will not only feature the best of Boholano art and culture, but also develop it and the local talents.

Gov. Erico B. Aumentado now sits at the helm of the Bohol Sandugo Foundation Inc., which is behind the preparations for the celebration, after being co-chair to former Tagbilaran City Mayor Jose V. Toribio. He is ably assisted by its newly appointed executive director, Tagbilaran City Mayor Dan R. Lim.

NATIONAL hero: Antonio Moreno's sculpture of the blood compact between Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and Rajah Sikatuna.

EDGARDO ESPINOSA

TRAVEL BRIEFS

New Manila-Macau flight

AIR Macau, flag carrier of Macau, is opening a third weekly flight between Manila and the former Portuguese territory starting July 22.

Narciso J. Gan, marketing representative of the Macau Government Tourist Office (MGTO)-Philippines, said the additional flight would further boost the growing tourist traffic between Manila and Macau.

Air Macau's third flight will serve Manila travelers, Tuesdays and Saturdays. Flight SM852 leaving Macau at 7 a.m. and arriving in Manila at 9:40 a.m. and leaving at Manila at 11:10 a.m.

Call 8122505/8133047 or visit www.macauairways.com.

Extra treats for Makati hotel guests

GOODIE Suites, the business hotel at the corner of Buchanan and Legaspi Streets in Makati, is offering free scones to-date, snacks and shuttle service to and from the Boulevard Roxas Plaza Mall in its guests until Sept. 15.

Guests can avail of the Bloddeuwedd Tower promo that includes room accommodation for single or double occupancy, continental breakfast for two, mini spread in room, Executive Suite, P2,000 net; Junior Suite, P4,000 net; One-bedroom Suite, P7,500 net; and top-of-the-line 2-Suite at the penthouse, P10,000 net. Rates are inclusive of government tax and service charge.

Rifford Suites, managed by BWTI, Ronda International, has fully furnished suites, a well-equipped gym, on-call executive, satellite television, in-room safety deposit box, coffee, and networking facilities, mini-bar, laundry and pressing services and fiber-wired working.

It also has a business office and cafe at the lobby with a wide choice of Continental and local dishes.

Call 6700000 or visit www.ridfordmakati.com.

Makati's favorite hotel

OAKWOOD Premier Ayala Center was one of the best performing properties in the Interface luxury category for the first half of the year.

In May, it posted its highest occupancy rate since it opened five years ago, 87 percent. Oakwood's performance, according to Al Laguna, resident manager, was credited to repeat clients.

Looking to the year, the outlook for the hotel sector seemed bleak.

But between January and May, Oakwood's monthly average occupancy rate was 81 percent. Industry average occupancy rate was 66 percent for the same period was 71 percent.

Most of Oakwood's clients were businessmen and travelers from the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Singapore and Japan. It also had a significant local clientele. Oakwood, the Department of Tourism's Kalakbay awardee in special accommodation facility in 2003, also enjoys a return rate of close to 100 percent. This refers to guests who return to the hotel after the first time they stayed here.

Located in the heart of Makati's financial district, Oakwood not only has rooms that are larger than regular hotel rooms but also have a kitchen, washing machine, dryer, cutlery, microwave oven and high-speed broadband Internet service connection.

The hotel has a total range of banquet rooms, and Galerie Health and Fitness Centre. Meals are served at the Cafe Breeze. It also has serviced offices.

'Zenaritana' proms ongoing until September

ASTORIA Plaza offers "Zenaritana Down your Thrills Room Promo" for one- or two-bedroom suites.

Enjoy overnight room accommodation with complimentary breakfast, an Astoria Plaza umbrella, free use of the gym and the pool, complimentary double service in the Antipas district, complimentary bottled mineral water, free local newspapers and tropical discount at Stonecrab Inn for P2,500 (one bedroom suite) or P3,900 (two-bedroom suite).

Astoria Plaza's promo is valid until Sept. 30. Rates are subject to service charge and government tax.

The Astoria Plaza is managed by Toronto Hotels & Resorts and is at 20-3 Escriva Drive, Ortigas Business District, Pasig City. Call 6347111 or visit www.astoriaplaza.com.

Boracay loan summer package

PINK Jeep Boracay is offering a loan summer package until Nov. 30.

The package includes three days/two nights with Deluxe Room accommodation and breakfast, transfers via Kalibo or Caticlan airports, boat ride to/from the Cove/Lan resort in mutual, welcome drink, free use of the swimming pool, bubble pool and Jacuzzi. A 50-percent discount will be given for the use of the Alpha Fitness Center and Nick's Tambayan facilities.

Rates are single occupancy, P4,665 net/person and P2,835 net/person for extra night; with breakfast, twin sharing, P3,885 net/person and P2,535 net/person for extra night with breakfast, triple sharing, P3,555 net/person, and P2,205 net/person for extra night with breakfast.

Child rate is P825 net/person, while extra night with breakfast is P300 net/person.

Call 6432223-27 or visit Pink Jeep's office at the 32-E Bidalakumal Boracay Center, Manoc-manoc, Makati City.

Rainy-day package

CELEBRATE in Cesar's bungee with the Manila Pavilion Hotel's Honeymoon, a rainy-day room package that comes with an in-room Filipino set breakfast for two, Jimpoy cap-to-a-topless room accommodation and the raindrops bill you to celebrate.

Honeymoon is available for local residents at P3,000 net, and runs until Sept. 30. Call 528-0111/ext 2255 or 2349.

SEMHA MUSEUM

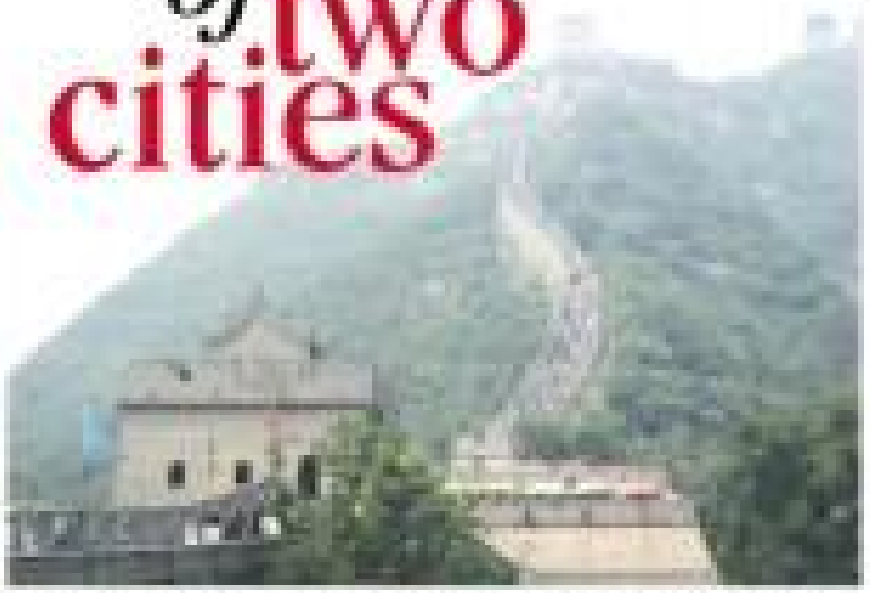
The new Subic Bay Historical Center recently opened its doors to the public and offers a creative way of showing the rich cultural history and heritage of Subic. The new museum has reference materials, books and multimedia resources for those who are writing about the Freeport.

AWARDS FOR FILIPINOS

Asiana Airlines (OZ) recently celebrated 10 years in the Philippines by honoring dedicated Filipino personnel in the passenger and cargo services. Awarded are (starting fourth from left) passenger traffic manager Peter Mo; administrative manager Ms. Rosanna Rachelle Navarro; sales manager for cargo Ms. Lina S. Mariano and operations manager Bernadette S. Perez. With them are (from left) regional manager Hyun Chin, international diversified group CEO and logistics division president Dae C. Hwangbo, air and travel division president Gary H. de Guzman, station manager Ms Seon Suk Choi, Development Corp. CEO and EVP Victor Jose I. Lacson and Asiana Airlines cargo manager Jo Se Jun.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

A tale of two cities



With 2 subway lines sold: "Shame no one from here Beijing without climbing the Great Wall."

Text and photos by Yenyo Bagsic-Reyes

"BEWARE of pickpockets, leave your passports and other valuables in the safe box of your hotel room, don't drink from the hotel's faucet, don't buy water from street vendors since it's not clean, be careful of thieves, keep your bags close to you all the time..."

Our first day in China was greeted with warnings and cautions from our guide, Anna Mara. But her admonitions didn't alarm this writer or any of the travel agents from Manila. "Strong Filipino din pala," quipped one of them. "Kaya na nga siguro."

Contrary to Mara's warnings, however, our six-day tour to Beijing and Shanghai, sponsored by Manila Travelland Philippine Airlines, was relatively pleasant and trouble-free.

The fact that most Chinese don't speak the universal language means they don't pester you to buy their wares, for instance. You are left to enjoy the sights and sounds of these ancient, magnificent cities.

China is no stranger to tourists. The first tourist guide to China was published in 1900, and by the turn of the 20th century, Beijing was playing host to millions of tourists. The number of Westerners and tourist visitors continues to swell, and it's no secret a passport to become the planet's No. 1 travel destination.

Even Filipinos are increasingly getting to command to see China. "It's because of the close trade relations between the Philippines and China," says Daisy Chong, director of Manila Travelland Services Inc. "For example, the Philippines is trying to explore the China market for its dried mangoes, coconut oil and other non-

» back to 1»

Four luxuriously appointed sofa-beds...

...at a price well accommodated!

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AT THE HEART of Beijing is the Forbidden City, which has magnificent palaces, courtyards and gardens.

TOURISTS climb the Oriental Pearl TV Tower for a panoramic view of Shanghai.

SOUTH Lake Island, fronting Beijing's Summer Palace, is a favorite place for sailing and skating during the winter.

A tale of two cities

From page C1

wet[illegible]."

Alas, Filipinos enjoy shopping. They gave Ortencia to shop until they find out that most goods sold there are made in China. So, they come to China primarily to shop since it is much cheaper here than in other countries," he adds.

In Shanghai, Nanjing Pedestrian Street is a one-kilometer stretch of shops and eateries. It is known as Shanghai's 5th Avenue. The Xintiandi complex, except that this one is an open-air affair. Prices are very reasonable... if you know how to haggle.

In Beijing, Wangfujing Street sells everything from bags and trinkets to sweets on a stick, but it's mainly a good place to buy stuff like chopsticks, pillow covers, decorative knots and small statues.

Picturesque countryside

Beijing, a three-hour flight from Manila, is China's 7-hour big capital and home to countless historical monuments, both within the confines of the former city wall and out in the picturesque mountainous countryside.

It's a wonderful city—much cleaner and more tidier than I had anticipated, and very polite citizens without losing its historic flavor. We strolled out of place and never quite comfortable roaming around on our own, especially at night.

A full-day, sightseeing tour of Beijing includes a visit to the imposing Forbidden City, the secluded and guarded home to the former emperors of China. Fronting the Forbidden City is Tiananmen Square, at 98 acres the largest public square in the world.

Tiananmen is simply a park, very much like our own Luneta, but there or four times bigger in size and teeming with people. And you can also see the huge portrait of Mao Zedong at the entrance to the Forbidden City.

The Forbidden City has two moats/ponds and elaborately-cut roofs that go on and on. You will not be able to see exactly inside the buildings, but the façade is still impressive. Here, you must be prepared for a lot of walking.

Vertical challenge

Mao Zedong once said: "Shame on you if you leave Beijing without climbing the Great Wall." Yes, the highlight of most tours of China is the Great Wall. To really appreciate the Wall, you must spend more than just an afternoon there.

We climbed the Great Wall once after one stop. We couldn't believe the terrain would be so steep and severe as it was. We had assumed the wall would traverse rolling hillsides. Instead, it places it climbed almost vertically up the sides of mountains.

We climbed as far as we could go... up to the third station, with 642 steps—and, yes, the view from the top was well worth the climb. The section of the Wall we climbed was particularly well-kept and truly free of peddlers. The vendors were mainly kept to a section of Badaling at Juyongguan.

THERE'S no better place to enjoy traditional Peking Duck than in Beijing.

THE CHINESE Acrobat Show in Beijing is a dazzling exhibition of grace and agility.

EARLY 20th-century European buildings in The Bund (Shanghai) take your breath away when lit up at night.

A visit to China would not be complete without soaking in the sights and sounds of its two jewels, Beijing and Shanghai

Other attractions

After a day of walking and climbing, it didn't hurt for us to see a traditional Chinese acrobat show just before dinner.

"This is one entertainment that must not be missed on a visit to Beijing," noted Glen. "China has many world-class acrobatic troupes because practically every province and major city has its own acrobatic troupe, and children are selected to be trained as performers at a young age."

Some acrobatic routines were so awesome as to verge on the impossible. A highlight was the group bicycling show, with 12 gals standing up opposed to one bicycle with their hands spread out like a peacock. Truly exciting!

The best recycling time is bringing us back to the grounds of the Dowager Empress' Summer Palace. The sprawling estate, a beautiful retreat in the northwest suburbs, is the largest and most splendid of all imperial gardens.

The palace was rebuilt during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The complex includes temples, courtyard residences, an opera theater, graceful bridges, as well as the revered Long Corridor, richly decorated with imaginary and historical scenes.

OSCAR Chong, director of Panda Travel Services Inc.

Shanghai's best

It's a two-hour flight from Beijing to Shanghai. Shanghai is often likened to a dazzling pearl in the center of the vast coast, where the golden channel of Yangtze River flows to the sea. The city is much like Hong Kong—fast paced, glittering, fashionable.

SHANGHAI'S Maglev Train, the world's first magnetic levitation train, can reach speeds of up to 431 km/hour, reducing a 30-km journey to an 8-minute ride.

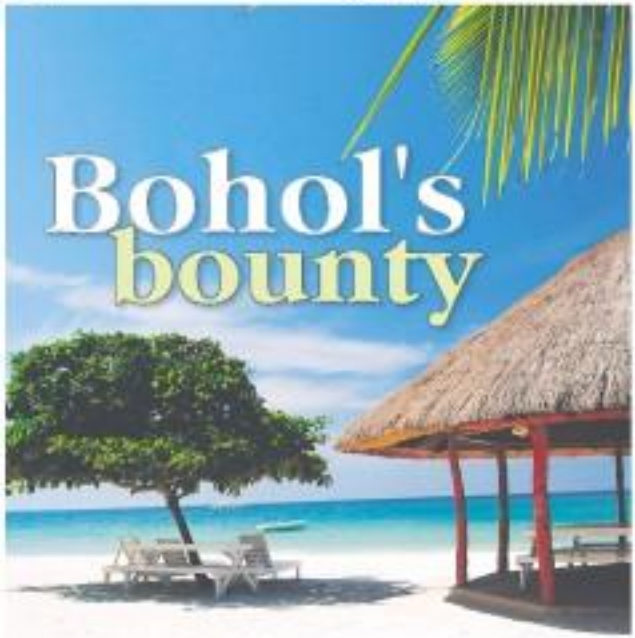
It's fun to leave Beijing without visiting the giant pandas at the City Zoo.

TIANANMEN Square is a good starting point for exploring the surrounding sights, such as Mao's tomb, the National Museum and the Forbidden City.

NANJING Street in Shanghai is a one-kilometer stretch of shops and eateries. It becomes a small train that transports shoppers who are too tired to walk.

THE SUMMER Palace has the largest and most splendid imperial garden in Beijing.

Bohol's bounty



BOHOL is a pleasurable destination blessed with pristine sand beaches and breathtaking marine life.

By Abraham Florendo
Cover Boiler

THE TARSIER is worth the trip to Bohol. This incredible, beautiful creature, the oldest living mammal on the planet, is smaller than a little girl's fist; its saucer-round eyes make up a third of its face, and its tail is longer than its body. It's nothing you've seen anywhere in the world. You want to cuddle it and fondle it (but you are forbidden to touch it), to coo and whisper gooey gibberish to it. They cling to the branches of small trees, unmoving and unblinking, at the Corella sanctuary.

You wish for them to close their startled eyes to the rest our onlookers, locals and foreign, tourists, with their cameras fumbling bubble and lyrebird-swell bursts of camera lights. What unfortunate fool the tarsier first wants to live in peace, in the solitude of its 65 million years, to be pristine forces entertainment?

Bohol does. Bohol is host to the tarsier (Tarsius carpiti), the biggest of its kind, contrary to claims, the tiniest being in Indonesia. The rare and endangered Philippine tarsier is emblematic of Bohol, whose stupendous natural and ancestral wealth, are as unique, awesome and endearing as the tarsier.

The tarsier says university professor, Eric Catarin, is the ancestor of Boholanos. There may be some profound, primitive truth to that.

Quite expectedly Bohol's ecocultural tours are one of the most valuable in the country. In this small cluster of islands (350,000 ha., pop. 1.2 million) are packed some of the country's most spectacular seascapes (like the incomparable Chocolate Hills), the oldest colonial churches (in Baclayon, Loay, Maribojoc and Loboc, which produced the world-famous Children's Choir), glorious living ancestral homes (especially in Baclayon and Alburquerque), awe-inducing centuries-old trees (like the Inabanga centennial of the blood compact between Sikatuna and Legaspi), the best furniture makers (in Loboc, whose craftsmen in the old days were responsible for the massive church and home furnishings that are today worth their antique weight in gold), the most delectable delicacies and crops (among them, the ube, perfected by the country's foremost ice cream companies), and the best diving spots in the world (in Panglao and Balicasag in Panglao).

Singles, with its indispensable (to Bohol they are "Galapit-white") beaches, is steadily being developed into an resort-and-beach destination to rival Boracay. Some of Bohol's beach clubs and resorts are listed along Panglao's beachfront.

BBT up close to the tarsier, the world's smallest primate at the man-made forest, Loboc Bilar

This ecological-cultural showcase has become a tourism powerhouse

Helping along

Though nature has not been stingy in Bohol with its gifts, Boholanos have been helping a along, whether strengthening its ecological ecosystems—as in the man-made 7,000-ha mahogany forest in Loboc-Bilar planned by young students in the '50s and in the search of a renowned politician, Lino Chatto, the 1,700-ha mangrove reforestation in Banacon island—or enhancing its tourism treasures, such as envisioned by Gov. Erico Aumentado, who recently climbed to his second term in office.

Over at breakfast at the Panglao Island Nature Resort, a lovely place 15 minutes drive away from downtown Tagbilaran, which (address would be greatly with "when you've got paradise in mind..." (e-mail: inrinfo@mozcom.com), Governor Aumentado talks about "introducing new destinations" and "visiting hotels and inns to expand," among his priority short-term projects in Ubay, with its botanical gardens and resthouse and agri-research facilities that he intends to be the biggest, if not the only, agri-tourism center in Western Visayas. He's also looking at developing the

NEON Designer Miguel Arevalo and Nissy Dayton (Santa Ana)

COUPLES charming boss Paul-Henri Duillet with Cecile Crespo

PICTURE Company couple Eileen and Vincent Grey

LOUSHINE make-up artists Bobbie Flores and Zeng Zalosa

SWAROVSKI show director Michel Sabonnes and PCX Jess Magri-Jenni Epperson

ACCESSORY geniuses Arriel Papa and Maggie Daniel

Totally gay and happily married in my Swarovskis

DIAMONDS are a girl's best friend, but if you're no ordinary girl, then Swarovski crystals are what make you smile. These brilliantly sparkling gems are more versatile for garment accents or hair accessories.

The pre-modern fashion world is all about establishing your own creativity rather than re-liveing results. So goodbye to the huge meeting rocks that John hung from their ears! Swarovski's crystal release offer endless and more exciting possibilities to adorn the body.

Of course, I keep telling myself that I should start investing in real diamonds so I can have something to pass on to my already fashion-conscious 10-year-old, Annika. Somehow, though, the dazzling shimmer of Swarovski-encrusted jewelry is all my fancy, to the "Runway Rocks" fashion road-show's last month, the clothes and accessories were astonishing and so original, I knew that I was not ready to give up my fashion pretensions.

Anyone can look pretty, but the real challenge is how to come up with an original and unique fashion statement. Influenced and polite makeup by Shu Uemura's talented hang fashion brought the desire component even further. The most striking color also had huge, coloured lashes that went right out of my book. Creativity was in full bloom that evening.

And so was the front. Being won her dynamic buddy Tina Tinio. She just recently launched the Shu Uemura Lid-Allure lipsticks at the Luisiana Gallery Restaurant. At that event, I saw her from everywhere counting and was second to the last guest. Of course, the last guest was my other sportsmate the same time zone, Ben Yap.

One of the Swarovski themes was "Rock, Light," a glittering mixture of light, an and journey. This particular theme was similar to the overall look of this year's Hari Hotel Mabuhi.

The happening part of Nakpil Street was closed and transformed to a runway, where stage for the modern, face-dressed ladies who hosted up the Cuenca street party. Comedies of Swarovski shoe extravaganza, forced swing a valuable, honorably arranged costumes promenaded to this year's theme "A Midsummer White Dream."

All the costumes are to make room for a small digression. I would like to recommend watching On The "Fantasy's version of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Carlos Romulo Theater at the PCIC Building. They had their premiere last Friday and it was amazing. It will run every weekend until mid-September. Check out their website for more details (www.bardsat.ph). Our cultural world is in dire need for more activities.

Gay sea

And now, back to fun! Fridy! As I ascended the stage to my dressing, mirror-accented room by Raoul Randero, I saw a sea of good-looking men cheering me on. I was on Barbara's color fashion campaign. Now I know why my single girlfriends are having a difficult time finding decent guys. Not only is there a shortage of eligible bachelors, but most girls also have to compete with other "sisters."

But in fairy-tale/fantasy scenario was taken out. John Lapus. It's a good thing that freedom of speech is actively practiced in this country. John's graphic humor is refreshing. If I were to be reincarnated as a gay person, I would want to be a cross between Tita and Jiggy! I would request for a body is Jo.J.R. Rama.

Come it is to coincide the cats and open that evening selling moderns' look Jojo designed by friend and wonderful stylist Cookie. I was so happy to find a supplier to do my fairy wings and other costumes for my party. My fairy designer (see pics tomorrow!), Bojo Lazard, had to post me off the mall before I bought all the available wands.

Wedding anniversary

I had in mind for my 10th wedding anniversary an intimate, yet tribal dinner for just family and friends. Tatay's theme has Bingo but, just "dinner pantos" is fun for, but I just can't be it.

Little bonded, Voodoo-looking, African-Nazis dolls fabricated by my favorite accessory designer Happy Daniel were displayed next to whole eggs and picture frames. Pineapple-roasted designer demon Barretto excitably arranged the theme and flowers, particularly the day before with my cousin Carina Carpio from Cavagna, the flowers of flowers. Make-believe, the "Above and beyond," ala-organized series of Cebuis, was an accommodating that she even experimented with ostrich barbecue steaks to make the menu more exotic.

Highlighted by a photo session with my photographer Phil Bam, the food and kind of hour of the drama of Harry Dangz and a fantastic video created in two days by Kristi Lee (jeanie@mydestiny.net), the evening was a memorable.

Ten years of wedded bliss have gone by, hopefully without much turbulence. My very tolerant husband, Dennis, has gone through several costume changes and wig colors. He calls it evolution. We both have gone through numerous changes since Sep. 1, physically, job-wise, personality-wise... really not much is the same as it was in 1994. And we both think the changes are great! Keeps life interesting.

Space is the flip side of evolution. We've changed, yet we've allowed ourselves to grow in separate ways without betraying each other. It's wonderful that even if my public persona is not there, I know that when it's time, or time of, anywhere, he will still be there, as always.

E-mail feedback to tessa.bravo@inquirer.com.ph.

TESSA!

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

SHU Uemura hair and makeup artists with designer Jojo Cortez

LUMIERE GANG. Cameron Rica Aduyan, Baby Imperial and Simon Reiss

PRETTY groupie Vicky de Leon and young designer Wish Dadea

SHU Uemura's Vincent Jeanniard

SWAROVSKI executives Kim Bacani and Stockman Rob Imre Pijlen

DESIGNER Patricia Ramos-Diaz with DJ Marianne

ARTISTIC BUDDIES. Esmeralda's pa-bida, Rene Escobar, with Mimi and Julian Tan

BACKSTREET John Lapus

FASHION RADICALS. Tina Tinio (in vintage Dino Rodriguez) with her cool mom Mary Ann and me

THE "SUMMER" Rocks" fashion show

NEW friends at Soul